ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: PAUSING TO CULTIVATE OUR GARDENS: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN ENGAGED IN CREATIVE JOURNALING

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This phenomenological dissertation explores the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause (CJP), a phrase describing the moment in which the participant chooses herself and engages in an activity of expression. Grounded in the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, biblical Christian principles, and the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, this research focuses on the practice of a creative journaling pause to assist a woman in cultivating her personal garden, in particular herself as an authentic individual. The metaphors of a sand garden and an oasis are used as descriptors to illuminate the phenomenon. The stories of the women hidden in the sand, or the depths of their journal pages, surfaced through our conversations in the moments of our four creative journaling pauses. Each pause, likened to an oasis, gave space to dwell in rest, freedom, and renewal.

Thoele (2008) identifies women as "multi-focused, multifaceted, multi-tasking wonders" (p. 21). Yet, the various aspects or roles of a woman's life may not always

align with her ability to focus on self. Thus, the phenomenon of a creative journaling pause intrigues me with what it means to be a woman discovering and rediscovering her authentic self through the actions of pausing and the process of creative journaling. In brief, chapter one turns to the phenomenon and reveals my abiding concern. Chapter two allows an investigation of the phenomenon through the life stories of other women who journal and create. Chapter three provides a philosophical and methodological grounding that leads to a plan of engagement for my research. Chapter four reveals the essential themes from the lifeworld texts provided by the six participants of the study: A Disturbance Awakens—A Journey Towards An Oasis; A Chasm Remembered—A Vulnerability Exposes The Path To An Oasis; A Moment Revealed—An Expression Unfolds In the Oasis; and, An Openness Extended—A Return from the Oasis. Chapter five discusses the pedagogical implications of a creative journaling pause as the participant comes to the table, sits at the table, and leaves with the table in which she cultivates her garden, her authentic self.

PAUSING TO CULTIVATE OUR GARDENS: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN ENGAGED IN CREATIVE JOURNALING

By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and my parents, Mr. Ronald and Mrs. Sandra L. Riley. Without them, this educational journey would not have been possible. They are the chief beings in my life. Their presence, love, support, and encouragement have helped to make me the person that I am. *I am because they are.* Thank you.

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.
Phil 4:13

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Finally … rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14)

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CHAPTER ONE:
TURNING TO THE PHENOMENON: CULTIVATING THE GARDEN TO STAY THE COURSE OF LIFE—A WOMAN PAUSING

A Poetic Pause

Father God …
It is I
Your daughter,
the other woman-at-the well
praying
for my sisters,
as individuals
whose self-respect has lost self-interest
whose mind keeps her in bondage
replaying the tape of regrets … and, "only if I"
'cause God I know you love her too
I see your hand reaching for her …
I hear your voice calling her name …
I imagine you holding her in your arms
whispering "I love you"
Father God …
It is I
Your daughter,
the other woman-at-the well
praying
Father God, Abba Father,
It is I.
(S. Riley, 2004)

As presented in the poem above, poetry is a reprieve for me—a way to escape briefly and take what I call parenthetical breaths, or short and sometimes limited moments of time, to refresh and refocus on myself. Such pausing allows for a creative dwelling filled with silence, sacredness, solitude, and society. These breaths provide a stop, a space, a pause, a withdrawal, or period of time for me to feel and acknowledge my life experiences as I am.

Fox (1997) asserts, "Writing and reading poems is a way of seeing and naming where we have been, where we are and where we are going with our lives" (p. 3). When

writing poetry, I am free to create, to make anew, to build, to embrace and/or forgive myself (and others, if needed). When reading poetry, I am free to relax, reflect, relate and release. With writing, I exist to compose; with reading, I exist to interpret; and, with both, I exist. I exist on the edge of that which I am as I wait for myself to express who I am through the course of the words floating in my mind or making an appearance on the paper.

As I read and as I write, I see them—the words making their presence known in the journal before me. In either stance—reading or writing, I am not a passive being. Both processes require a type of waiting, a moment of waiting that comes right before understanding and knowing. There is an inhaling as I take in visual images (through oral readings from others or reading silently to myself) and exhaling as I release thoughts (through a writing created via dictation or by hand)—the moment, the breathing, the pause. Yet, it is in the act of composing—or during an involved process of crafting and writing poetry—both internally in thought and externally in writing on a surface, that I feel most alive and involved in the creative ability to stay the course of life and "live as if [my] life were a curriculum for others" (Schubert, 1986, p. 423).

For me, as a writer-reader, the journey begins with seeing a word or image in my thoughts, which then evokes movement and starts a poem dressed with the experiences of life. The issue is taking the time to pause and make myself a priority while staying the course of life (to create and unearth the truth of who I am).

Embracing The Issue

Thoele (2008) identifies women as "multi-focused, multifaceted, multi-tasking wonders" (p. 21). For the most part, women have various aspects of their lives moving

simultaneously in various directions, if not in the same direction. Yet, unfortunately, these various aspects or roles of a woman's life—such as being a student, mom, professional, or social advocate—may not always align with her ability to focus on self. Individually, she is multi-tasking, or performing in various capacities for various people at the same time regardless of how she feels, who she is or what she wants and often needs. Sometimes, she is fully present and cognizant of what is happening to her. Other times, she is not fully present and/or readily available to herself, but yet she continues to multi-task. It is in these moments, she, the woman, needs to be equipped to stop, to breathe, to experience the being in which she stands to find peace—both externally and internally. It is during this time she must realize and acknowledge that the various aspects of her life are moving her, the woman, against who she is as an individual. For some women, this acknowledgment means becoming mindful about their health and loving themselves—the self buried under the weight of each of their life journeys. It means accepting that "the person who will never leave us, whom we will never lose, is our self" (hooks, 2003, p. 104). It means believing and actively loving self first.

> Learning to love our female selves is where our search for love must begin. We begin this journey to love by examining the ideas and beliefs we have held about the nature of intimacy and true love. Rather than embracing faulty thinking that encourages us to believe that females are inherently loving, we make the choice to become loving. Choosing love, we affirm our agency, our commitment to personal growth, our emotional openness. (hooks, 2003, p.104)

As a woman, I am aware that my multi-tasking can hinder my ability to operate as my authentic self in the world with others. Yet, also, as a writer-poet, I am aware of the significance writing has on the mindfulness and authenticity of being woman; and, I have learned to embrace the power of writing to awaken my voice daily as I seek to live with joy—constantly relating, examining, loving, healing and forgiving. This precious and

sometime naïve curiosity of where the words could take me allows me to stay fluid. My thoughts are able to flow without ever accepting negativity as a norm. Gracefully (or not), I expect to move forward as I write, anticipating change somehow from somewhere while hoping for the better and praying for peace (continued prosperity). As Heilburn (1988) asserts, "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p. 19). As a poet, I move myself and others to exist, to feel.

Writing is essential to an expression of self. In speaking of journal writing in particular, Peterson and Jones (2001) write, "Journals have provided the means for women to record their life stories and critical events, to solve problems, and for personal discovery and self-awareness" (p. 61). As Scriptures, or the Bible, proclaim, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, King James Version). In transposing the words "he" for "she," the woman's state of being is aligned with her inner thoughts of self. It is here, in this understanding, that she needs to be mindful of herself as a creative being—one who creates from within. The question is—How? The answer is—with her words.

Asking the Questions

Who are you Sonya?
I am a woman writing;
in butterfly time.
(S. Riley, 2011)

Over the years, writing has provided me as a woman with a structure to form, nurture, and project my voice about issues and/or situations that seek to define me improperly. From my vantage point, writing has given me a means to sort through and reject any notion of being someone's or something's other—an individual treated as an

"inherently opposed" (Collins, 1990, p. 69) object. My position within my words has given me the freedom to love, embrace, and try again with institutions and individuals who have pained me deeply at the core of my being—physically, spiritually, and/or emotionally—with their narrow oppressive views of who I am as a woman.

As a writer, I use my writing as a key to open every possibility of what it means to be female, unlocking my internal voice to examine myself as well as examine the external conditions surrounding me. I seek to leave no room for anyone to silence my existence personally, socially, professionally, or academically. Through self-examination, my writings inform me to grow and move beyond, or move forward, into my authentic self and life. This phenomenon of writing to examine and move forward has intrigued me with the hopes of discerning what it means to be a woman writing, discovering and rediscovering her authentic voice through her own written words. For this reason, several questions awaken my thoughts: How can the revelation of this phenomenon assist women with finding their internal voice through the external, therapeutic strokes of the writing utensil? For the female, what is writing? Who is she—as a poet or journal writer or a student-participant-writer learning to express self through words? Is she a student of her own writings? What does it mean to be a writer? a reader-writer?

So many questions—
Thoughts flooding my thoughts with thoughts;
will the rainbow come?
(S. Riley, 2014)

Now, over twenty years into my journey of presenting the love of God for women via poetry, I, as a writer, student, and teacher of writing, have learned to embrace the power of writing. This power is a force that awakens my voice daily as I seek to live with joy constantly relating, examining, loving, healing and forgiving. Like so many other

women writers, from girlhood to womanhood, my own life journey has been and is being shaped and moved-forward by my own personal writings (those shared and unshared with others). Thus, I continue this journey with the question: **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

Rain falls; water flows.
Weaving life stories with hand
I, woman, write.
(S. Riley, 2011)

For me, this current journey is about the continuous research and development of curriculum that presents us, women, with tools, like creative journaling—writing and drawing—to reclaim and/or present our stories of who we are. It leads me to ask more questions like: What is the lived experience of women who utilize writing and drawing as ways of moving-forward in their lives personally, socially, professionally, and academically—regardless of the situations life may introduce to them? What makes writing for the woman fluid, helping her to move forward in and with the consistent flow of life? Is moving forward a decision made before, during, or after writing, or does it come automatically with writing? Who or what determines the topic? At what age does writing to move forward start? Once it is ignited, is it applied to every life situation? Are the actions of writing and drawing her only anchors? Or is reading her own written words on the page the anchor that keeps her grounded?

Words holding me tight;
In the movement of the wind,
I write to breathe now.
(S. Riley, 2011)

I am a woman reading to write. I am a woman writing to read what I need to pause, to be free. I am woman writing.

The Writer Writing

My heart is inditing a good matter:
I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
(Psalms 45:1, KJV)

A writer is a person who creates meaning through words, discussing her inner thoughts outwardly on a surface, preferably paper, using a writing utensil, to engage herself with the outer world. The operative word "create" sparks imagination, will (or determination), and innovation in the person deemed the title of "writer" or "author." *Family Word Finder* (1986), a favorite thesaurus from my teenage years, describes the author and writer as the "penman," "scribe," scribbler," "creator," "originator," "maker," initiator," "inventor," "planner," and "producer." In a way, a writer helps to create a sense of reality as she inscribes feelings of awareness or normalcy to conditions or situations already seared in the thoughts of her readers, but not yet reflected upon or mentioned aloud.

For writers, writing is both a function and an object. As a function, writing is an active, vigorous external movement of the pen translating unseen thoughts into visible meaning. As an object, writing is a physical masterpiece of letters formed into words, often called "the writing" or "the text" built for a reader. In a sense, for a journal writer, the cahier or journal is like a bridge—a place for thoughts to cross over from the interior to the exterior to imagine, escape, and/or create a space for her to exist. It is the channel, or passage, where the language of experience is silently pronounced and given a way to presence. For me, within my poem *Of This Bridge*, I expose this function of the writer's bridge:

The natural utterance of text is silence—
nothing heard externally.
Yet, through, the mind's voice,
sounds are hearkened—awareness declared.
A mind comprehends meaning,
A hand interprets thought.
Mind to Hand. Thought to Page.
Internal to External—the text speaks
as voiceless eyes and tickled fingers engage the words
on the surfaces of this bridge, I hold to call—
My Journal.
(S. Riley, 2014).

Interestingly enough, there are several reasons why authors write and organize their thoughts in particular ways. For instance, a writer can write to inform or write to reflect. In expounding on the latter, Fulwiler (2002) writes, "Writing helps us figure things out in at least two ways. On the one hand it makes our thoughts visible, allowing us to expand, contract, modify, or discard them. … On the other hand, the act of writing itself generates entirely new thoughts that we can further manipulate" (p. 32). Yet, still, for whatever the reason and/or organizational style she chooses to write, a writer must take time alone, for herself, to create words with meaning, to create words with story. She must engage in what van Manen (2005) highlights as a "solipsistic operation" (p. 232)—an operation that "creates a directness and an emotional immediacy" from writing in solitude (p. 232). As a woman writing, this solitude, or alone time, may be the start of grounding her back to herself or just a gentle push to move forward.

Transformative Writing

Reiter (2009) defines transformative writing as "the intentional use of writing for psychological change and well-being" (p. 3). With the word "intentional," a revolution, or transformation, is imminent. The purpose for writing is set and defined as action aligns with thought. In so doing, our "thoughts and intentions announce [our] deepest wishes,

desires, and goals to [our] subconscious mind or inner sage, whose job it is to bring [us] more of what [we] project" (Thoele, 2008, p. 28). It is the transformation of internal thoughts birthed into an external existence where words initially without formation or sound become visible and, on occasion, heard. Writing is an intention to dig up (Heidegger, 1968) or bring forth words to liberate one's self. The words are like "wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 130). As Elbow (1998a) explains, "Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you *free* yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive" (p. 15). For me, it is an act that involves five P words—person (woman writer), process (a journey), purpose (an intention for writing), presence (a visible existence), and paradise (a garden). The person is a woman who writes; the process is prayer or poetry or creative journal writing; the purpose is self-discovery, self-love, and self-acceptance; the presence is established via a cahier—the outcome, the creative expression of self via a journal; the paradise is the existence of a garden or gardens that exude(s) cultivation and care.

The Woman Writer Writing: Telling Her Stories, Discovering Herself

> I have not had an easy life. I did not start out writing to attain worldly goods. I started out writing to save my life. …I wrote to comfort myself. (Walker, 2010, pp. 79-80)

A simple definition of a woman writing is a female who has chosen to inscribe words externally, either for an audience or not, as she relates to herself as woman. She is a woman who sits alone or with others, writing to self-explore, de-mask, unearth, and/or re-identify with her true self. She neither pretends nor compromises her needs or wants; she is authentically present in her writing space, expecting someday to have the conversation about "herself," which is now herself internally understood externally

through her own writing.

> The scribe, or author, could now begin to dialogue with [her] own visible inscriptions, viewing and responding to [her] own words even as [she] wrote them down. *A new power of reflexivity was thus coming into existence, borne by the relation between the scribe and [her] scripted text.* (Abram, 1996, p. 107)

In a sense, writing is a tradition, or practice, of self-transformation—a willingness to accept the mystical, or supernatural, evolutional journey to allow one's written thought to act as a pathway or bridge back to self through the various vestibules of thought. The written word is a powerful, focusing element; but the spoken word is too, both internally and externally forming our gardens—our bodies and the worlds in which and from which we live, or dwell.

The curriculum story. Long ago, "her" name traveled to the vault hidden deep within my mind. Yet, the words my 8th grade middle school science teacher spoke and the images she conjured that day are embedded still in my present-day memories. Prior to that day, the phrase body-type meant nothing to me. I had not thought of myself as a certain type of female, girl, or young woman at eleven or twelve or thirteen years of age. Words were not impressionable from the outside. I was who I was—just me—female, girl, and young woman, until, *she* began to speak, informing us—the remaining girls—to line up.

It was the beginning of Sex Education in Middle school. The boys had moved to another classroom to learn from another teacher; the girls remained to learn from her—except for the outliers, those girls and boys whose parents refused them the opportunity to learn "Sex Education" in school. The outliers, those sent to a third classroom, created a state of pause as we all watched in silence as they gathered their things and single filed out of the classrooms. If someone were watching from the outside, it would have been

like viewing a movie montage of slave ship owners lining-up people at the trading docks or Nazi officers standing guard, separating and shuffling one group of people to another area of the camp. The only difference being, there were no whips; there were no guns. With uninviting faces to those of us left behind, they, the outliers, left the room, moving with the utmost respect and obedience—one by one in single file; the door shut. Next, the remaining boys left; the door shut. Then, the teacher left behind with us, began to speak.

First, she engaged us—the remaining girls—in a discussion of taking care of our bodies by eating healthy and exercise. Then, we were asked to take off our shoes and line up to be weighed and measured. One by one our numbers were called out and written on a piece of paper clinging to a clip board.

After we were all weighed and measured, she—the teacher—passed out a weight and height chart and began to speak of its significance. Two of us sat silently, devastated. Her words told us we were not within range—our body did not conform to the chart, the categories of those within our age. The interesting thing is at that time the other girl and I were both thin, just curvy. It is a good thing the boys were ushered to another room for this first Middle School lesson about us as males and females. It was bad enough to engage in a silent struggle with myself about my old *non-thoughts* of body image with this new learned body image my teacher disclosed within a room full of girls. I am sure she, my Middle School Science teacher, did not intend to use the Sex Education curriculum to hinder my personal thoughts about body image, but it did.

I do not know what happened to the outliers and boys in the other classrooms. Maybe later in life, they were also unintentionally taught to discriminate against themselves—their own bodies too. And, sometimes in my moments of stillness now, I

often think what if I would have been a part of the outlier group. After all, my parents were doing a superb job. With them, I knew I was a girl; I was not placed in a box or curved into a particular shape. With them, my mom and dad, I was myself against the negative bodily images of the world. Yet, in school, in that Sex Education class, I was the girl who measured and weighed in the wrong category, struggling between the negative body images of the world and trying to figure out to which category on that chart I needed to belong so I could fix myself. Actually, the other girl struggled too.

Later, in our undergraduate teenage or young adult years (ages 18 or 19 or 20), we—the other girl and I—ran into each other at a local community church function. As we talked, we both remembered that day in class and discussed the effects of being the two "oddballs" in the girl class. Even, then, years later, we were both silently dealing with the aftermath of the images and words used that day. If only we knew then, in that class about how the other was feeling; maybe, we could have inspired each other to (a) embrace our weight and height numbers, (b) acknowledge our pain, and (c) create a new path—or maybe not. Even now, as I prepared to write about this event, my thoughts emphasized the meaning of writing in my life. Over the years, as a woman, writing has provided me with a structure to form, nurture, and project my voice about issues and/or situations that wish to define me improperly. From my vantage point, writing has given me a means to sort through and reject any notion of being someone's or something's Other. Then, in a pause with my thoughts a poem is birthed, capturing the essence of a Middle School foray, venture or assault—however one wants to view it, snakes lie waiting.

Snakes Lie Waiting

Her words called the storm,
casting darkness in the light
with each swirl of Her tongue.

Many other girls were there—
All but two safe.

Charted and *tossed* by non-approval,
one girl and I died.
Body image scattered.
The tempest killed us.

In silence, they sat.
The other girls knew.
In the aftermath, snakes lie waiting.
(S. Riley, 2014)

Three decades later, this story still stands as one of my personal seminal stories of being a female navigating between the internal and external words and images of her body. However, the missing piece now known is: Some external body image messages keep us, as girls and women, focused negatively on who were are as females; it is our choice to accept or neglect them. The external negative and distorted images, or snakes in the storm, are forever before us, as girls and women. Though the storms exist, or moments of confusion about who we are arise, we must not let our internal love for our bodily identity fade, disappear, or die to outside influences.

Even now, in my late-forties, other "life lessons" have arisen concerning my body. Yet, as Northrup (2006) asserts:

> No matter what your size, shape, percentage of body fat, or BMI, you and I …can start right this minute to express gratitude to our bodies for being home to our souls and allowing us to express our uniqueness on the earth at this time. The best way to do this is to stand in front of the mirror, look deeply into your eyes, and say, "I love you. You are beautiful." Over time, this will change every cell in your body! (p. 235)

Unfortunately, “Part of creating health at midlife is to regain the body acceptance and self-esteem that most of us lost when we entered adolescence” (Northup, 2006, p. 234). The other part, is acknowledging our own deficiencies as they relate to our bodies. The question I ask now is: What path on this course of our lives will we take this time?

Releasing the stones to rebuild a course of life. As I engage with internal and external parameters of words exposed to the edges of who I am, I embrace the action of risk that leads to balance, acceptance, and freedom. As a logophile, or lover of words, the risk is a must. At times, the lyrical presence of my thoughts must release themselves to the imperfections of the way in which I communicate externally—slow, reflective, and metaphorically.

In the events of trauma, I hear my internal voice—mysteriously and sometimes deliriously trying to make sense of it all aloud; yet, I am speechless. The words begin to pile up inside of me, causing my external physicality to expand beyond the circumference of its reality. My thin self becomes my thick self—protected, yet weighted with more pounds, or stones, than I was created to carry. Everything is swollen—face, neck, chest, stomach, thighs, legs, feet—fat. Each part of me holds my words, caring for my words—all-the-while dying or coming undone from the undo pressure of the pressing weight. The stones are placed haphazardly throughout my body, each organ trying to compensate for every word unspoken. The words, I love, are held within because I am, or was, afraid to speak. I hesitated to voice my opinion, my truth, my thoughts of no—for fear of hurting or neglecting the other person(s), only to hurt and/or neglect me. Yet, through the practices of *lectio divina* and creative journaling, the weight of the stones shifts and the poetry pours from my hand to the page. Through a single process or multiple processes of

creating, each bodily extraction encourages, motivates, and orchestrates.

Sometimes, poetry comes out of my body, like hot lava out of the ground—colorful, overbearing, devouring the old, and beginning the new. Sometimes, poetry comes out of my body like a butterfly, once a caterpillar, emerging from a cocoon colorfully vibrant, with wings, and fragility, or delicateness. Sometimes, poetry comes out of my body like budding roses on stems—thorny, somewhat closed, flowery, and varied in height (or depth). Sometimes, poetry comes out of my body like an abstract painting—asymmetrical, atypical, asexual, aged, and able in the world's atrium of my mind's eye. Then, sometimes poetry comes out of my body, like a path comes out of the ground in the middle of a field—imprinted one step, or experience of movement, at a time. Each poem is a field path moving in one direction or another, connected to the ground—its lifeline. Each poem provides the light, illuminating the path, from one garden (person, place, time, or thing) to the next.

The Garden

Rushing (2012) writes, "Everything is a garden and everything gardens" (p. 65) to "suggest that we can apply permaculture—natural principles and practices—to anything, garden, farm, community or individual human being" (p. 65). For the most part, I dwell in the life experiences of gardens. For me, the garden is a sacred place. It is a place where life and death occur simultaneously in the same space while emphasizing creation, community, and care in solitude and silence. It is a creative journal, a notebook, a cahier, filled with poetry and prayers from the past and present, illuminating the pathway to the future. It is a type of curriculum, a course of life that encourages and challenges growth, introspection, interests and prosperity (or peace). It is the place where God, nature, and

man meet. It is the place where my belief is centered; the place that yields the underpinnings of who I am. As Tuan (1977) writes, "'Center' means also 'origin' and carries a sense of a starting point and beginning" (p. 126). The garden, either metaphorically or realistically, is the place that grounds me at my core—the fundamental beginning of my curriculum vitae. It is the body, my body, the place that holds, or houses, mind and spirit.

From some of the different perspectives of who I am, I have learned to honor my garden—the various aspects of who I am contained in one body. As a Christian, I embrace the Bible and aim to live the teachings of Jesus. As a woman, I embrace the bodily essence and life cycles of my being female. As Black, I embrace the color of my skin, the thickness of my hair, the voluptuous altitude of my bodily shape. As an academic, I embrace the freedom to know and learn and teach. As love, I embrace the sensuous feeling of wholeness as I am me. As food, I embrace tasting a form of delicious in the aroma, the touch, the presentation of nutritional morsels entering my mouth. As a poet, I embrace the word, the creation, the coming into, the bringing forth. Yet, still, in my garden, there is more to me—words unspoken and not yet known.

From the Christian perspective, the Garden of Eden is the place where God made male and female in his image—birthed from the dirt, called them to have dominion and multiply, and encouraged man to embrace woman as his helpmeet (Genesis 1; Genesis 2). It is the place where the female, the woman, is loved and cultivated as a garden in the Song of Solomon (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). It is in these places, the biblical gardens that I embrace my womanhood—liberated, not oppressed. From the meditative perspective, it is the place where I found a labyrinth—a circular maze used to untangle my thoughts

while walking and praying reflectively. From a nourishment perspective, it is the place where I gathered sweet potatoes, bitter lemons, juicy apples for sour vinegar, and chili peppers. From a nature perspective, it is the place where I learned to respect the earth and its creatures—allowing bees to pollenate thorny and sweet smelling flowers peacefully as I watch and not touch. From a dwelling perspective, it is the body, the home, the temple of the spirit—the Holy Spirit and my spirit—in which I connect internally to myself and from which I connect externally to the world's gardens of people, places, and things.

The garden is the place where life lessons are birthed and nurtured in solitude and silence and sacredness. It is the place of diversity. Life and death, understanding and knowledge, growth and barrenness, rainbow and storms exist, not necessarily as opposites, but as varying concepts etched into the sequences of life. The body, my body, is the garden that poetry nurtures and cultivates through stints of withdrawal or pause I use to engage in a curriculum, or course of life, which includes the processes of praying and reading and thinking and writing.

Traveling Between Gardens, Accepting The Pause For A Moment On The Edge

The word "garden" is defined as "a plot of land for the cultivation of flowers, vegetables, herbs, or fruit" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2002, p. 571) and "a fertile, well-cultivated region" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2002, p. 571). If well cultivated, a garden exhibits beauty, creativeness, and boundaries, encouraging a space for pause, or withdrawal, from the everyday mundane activities of life. It becomes the paradise, or utopia, in which to take a moment to address and/or reflect on an area of one's life that may need adjusting and/or attention. As Casey (2009) writes, gardens "are liminal just insofar as they are at the threshold between a series of things: between dwelling-as-

residing and dwelling-as-wandering; between sky and ground, horizon and path; and between standing stock-still and running" (p. 155). From a personal perspective, the boundary of each garden places me on the edge of what is natural and what is contrived (Casey, 2009), concerning who I am, allowing me to visualize, explore, create, and possess, or simply just live through my body. With my body, my personal garden, I experience other gardens that edify—challenge and/or encourage—my own life story as I take moments to engage with other people, places, and things. Together, we '"live' as if [our lives] were a curriculum for others" (Schubert, 1986, p. 422).

From a scriptural perspective, gardens (as places and things) have several uses. For instance, Fink (2003) writes:

> Obviously a garden provided food for its owner (Jer. 29:5, 28; Amos 9:14), but it also served other aesthetic and utilitarian purposes. It was a place of beauty where plants were pleasing to the sight (Gen. 2:9). As a guarded and protected place (Song 4:12), persons could retreat there for prayer (Matt. 26:36–46), for quiet or solitude (Esther 7:7), or even for bathing (Susanna 15). It provided a cool escape from the heat of the day (Gen. 3:8; Susanna 7). Friends could meet in gardens (John 18:1–2), or banquets could be served there (Esther 1:5). It thus was often associated with joy and gladness (Isa. 51:3). … and gardens were used as burial sites (2 Kings 21:18, 26; John 19:41–42). (p. 622)

Even today, the garden offers the same aesthetic (artistic and appealing) and utilitarian (useful and practical) purposes for the body to participate actively and/or rest in the midst of God, oneself, or others. In the gardens, I have learned to watch, listen, and participate with the expectation of experiencing life, sometimes yielding teachable moments for change—or not. For the most part, all gardens are entered for a pause, a moment, in life with some type of pleasure; and yet, the outcome, or the way in which I leave a garden, is not consistently the same. Each garden is enriched with its own teachable life-cycle (life to death) moment(s). In the next few pages, I give three examples which included or

involved my personal garden in other gardens.

The garden: A woman's meeting. I was raised as a part of his family. For eighteen years, I never questioned him; I never had a reason. Why would I? Each of his letters had stories that confirmed his love for me; each of his words led back to the sacrifice he made for me. I had no reason to doubt him. Everything around and about me, knew his love. And, yet in 1988, I met the opposition.

It came from a group of women who were adamant that I did not know him. A simple introductory icebreaker of using adjectives to name ourselves turned wrong as I introduced myself as a Christian Black woman and one woman asked, "How can you name yourself a Christian as a woman? … an oppressive religion?" From her question, I answered that I did not know Christianity as oppressive, which then sparked a conversation and exhibition of other women telling their stories of how God allowed men to abuse them and showing me their scars from fathers he allowed to hurt them. Yet, still after their words, I did not know Him like they did. For them, he was an oppressor of women who permitted men to dominate and violently abuse them. For me, he was not and he does not.

For eighteen years of my life, I never questioned his love for me—or any other women for that matter. Why start then, that day, as I stood in the midst of the opposition, angry women voices spewing hate toward my words of devotion to a Heavenly Father who loved me. How could they speak against him? They knew him not. Did they not read Ephesians 5? 1 Peter 3:7? Isaiah 54? John 8:3? or any other Scriptures in which the female, woman, girl is loved, blessed, embraced, and protected in her feminine being.

In the physical, I have never met Him, but in the spirit I was (I am) daily connected to Him through the bound loved letters, the Scriptures, passed from generation to generation read with faith, read with hope. Yet, as I contemplated their words, each woman's story revealed raw wounds too deep for any type of reconciliation. Their fathers' exploitation, or misuse, of power in the family caused them to reject any sign of a loving father exhibited or displayed from either a spiritual or natural perspective.

It was the neglect, abuse, and abandonment of their fathers that developed painful memories of unforgiveness within some of the women in the group. Unfortunately, the women were stuck and unable to move beyond the pain, or past hurts, their fathers caused by making them *the other*, or something less than their authentic selves. Needless to say, this garden—a women's group—caused a pause, or moment of withdrawal, for me in my life.

In the late eighties, through this experience, I began a personal journey of finding, documenting, and presenting the love of the Heavenly Father to the daughters in many gardens (those who knew him and those who did not) through poetry. It did not matter to me if they were Christian or not; what mattered was the naming of love experienced from male to the female. Even today, in my garden and those of others, I still write and read for females, women, girls and myself—writing and reading life stories extending from the internal to the external and external to the internal. I am a woman in an external garden writing from, for, and with my body, my personal garden—the feminine me. I am a woman experiencing someone else's garden to reflect and consider my own garden, from interior to exterior. From the pause, in my garden, a poem is birthed.

Her Garden

From Her Garden, you cannot see pain—
Wounds of maleness, skin bruised—
her female sore screams.
Though a survivor, her body remembers hurt—
wishing for rainbows
in Her Garden.
(S. Riley, 2015)

The garden: A tourist town. The colorful tones of the earth are illuminated in the dirt, sand, and clay ranging from dark to medium to light—black, brown, red, tan, and white. Sometimes, the dirt's rainbow is the phrase I use to describe the colorful variety within the earth's surface. Actually, I affectionately call any colorful variation a rainbow. From the Christian perspective, the rainbow, a colorful arch in the sky, is a promise that life will continue despite disastrous storms that entail long periods of rain and flooding. Yet, metaphorically, the word "rainbow" is also used to symbolize a bridge to something new, diversity, and process.

As a person colored black, the Native American and white hues of me are not known from the surface of my existence; and, yet, at family reunions, it is long established, from generations back, that my black hue speaks to a portion of who I am, not all of who I am. Though, I love and embrace my blackness, I always pause when I think or am reminded of how limiting racial distinctions can be—sometimes downright demeaning; and, yet, it is how we, as humans—particularly as Americans—identify our differences. However so, it may be: The surface of our personal gardens does not uncover the various other characteristics hidden within who we are as individuals; and, also, most importantly, as beautiful as our God given hues are, no one has the right to call us outside of our names. For we are all human (or gardens), breathing, formed from the dust of the

ground. Yet, some gardens (or humans) are determined to discriminate and humiliate those who are different from themselves.

As a teenager, my Black family and I were on a family vacation in a tourist town. As we walked back to the hotel from the ocean, we stopped on a curb to wait our turn to cross the street. In that moment, a bus drove past and a White man yelled, "Nigger." Needless to say, this garden event caused a pause, or a moment of withdrawal, for me to pray, reflect, and write about this incident. Based in Scripture, a poem is birthed—A Dirt's Rainbow.

> And the Lord God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

A man hollered loud.
The word NIGGER filled the sky.
Rainbow-less view.

From the bus with dust
The man sat with his same hue—
Ashes to Ashes.

NIGGER blossoming
hatred—a weed strangling
roses in the field.
Called out of name,
I forgave—refusing hate—
in fields pulling weeds.

Dust-to-Dust we are.
Did he not know we were he?
Dirt breathing life now.

His hue did not kill,
but his spoken word bruised;
yet, love healed the rose.

The Garden of love
Embraces diversity
And weeds out NIGGER.

Family as flowers—
We are of various hues,
white black native me.

Rainbow shining love—
my family and I living—
mixed colorful hue.

The man hollered loud.
The word NIGGER filled the air.
Rainbow-less view.

He and I still,
living beyond a moment—
words dividing dirt.

Where is the Rainbow?
I thought as the bus rode by—
Dust-to-Dust we are.
(S. Riley, 1988/2015)

The garden: A writing group. In the summer of 2000, I went to Alberta, Canada in search of writing as a personal development process to embrace the woman I am. The Women's Words Summer Writing Week Institute provided me just that opportunity.

I wanted and needed to love myself, as I believed God loved me. I wanted and needed to live within the meaning of who I am. It was there, in the garden of a *Writing through Transitions* group, that I wrote to workshop myself, or personally develop, and experience the power and use of words to transform. This course cleansed and centered me. It helped me to find the places and spaces to live freely within the realm of my words—trusting my internal self with the external group of women who were on the same journey as I—praying and thinking through poetry and creative journaling. This experience nurtured the importance of entering the natural pauses of life and creating self-imposed withdrawals to re-center myself into who I am in my personal garden, acknowledging and being thankful for my own curriculum vitae, or course of life. From the pause, or the moment taken to appreciate the life events that make me who I am, a poem is birthed.

The Pause
Wanting and Needing—
me breathing and writing me,
I love Canada.
It gave me freedom through a class of living me,
Writing Transitions—welcoming the withdrawal.
I want rain. I need rain.
The reason to stop and appreciate, I am—
woman, pausing, now.
(S. Riley, 2015)

The garden: *Lectio Divina*. Earle (2003) asserts that "*Lectio Divina* invites us to read the texts of our lives, to listen to what is occurring, to approach both our personal and our corporate lives with care and attention" (p. 4), centering on who we are as

individuals (personal) and in community (corporate). It is the practice I have used for years, though not knowing it by name until recently—*lectio divina*; and, in my experience, Earle is right. In the course of its practice, I yearn to approach my life with care and attention, allowing myself to be present in each moment I breathe.

In four steps, I am able to pause as I read, reflect, respond, and rest; and, then, the prayers and poetry and creative journaling that arise from my being are at the precious apex of taking time to hear myself live. Each movement of *lectio divina* is a process of prayer (St. Benedict, 530 A.D/1998; Earle, 2003; Gargano, 1992/2007; Painter, 2014): (a) lectio (reading), (b) meditatio (reflection or thinking), (c) oratio (speech or address), and (d) contemplatio (contemplation, resting) (Painter, 2014). In silence, as I center myself within my personal garden and move within the course, structure, curriculum of the garden *lectio divina* presents, I feel as though (a) I am one with God and myself and (b) life shifts. From the pause, or the moment taken to rest physically and spiritually, a poem is birthed.

Father God.
It is I
Your daughter,
the other woman-at-the well
taking a moment to pause
praying.
(S. Riley, 2004)

Phenomenology—A Showing From The Edge Of The Garden

Van Manen (1997) writes, "Phenomenological research is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness" (p.12). As an educator, I have learned to appreciate the spoken and non-spoken—the weaving of words through the existence of my students. The verbal student and non-verbal student may exist simultaneously in a learning environment. However,

neither student is more important than the other. Both types of student provide a way of saying—an interwoven presence of the class.

For instance, Heidegger (1959/1993c) writes, "*Sagan* means to show, to let something appear, let it be seen and heard" (p. 408). I suppose one of the best practices to internalize as an educator is letting your *saying show*—a way of addressing existence with meaning. It is with an understanding that the words and gestures of our instruction have the weight of a thoughtful presence. As Heidegger (1971a) admonishes:

> To say and to speak are not identical. A man may speak, speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing. Another man may remain silent, not speak it all and yet, without speaking say a great deal. (p. 122)

For the most part, "silence is not just absence of speech or language" (van Manen, 1997, p. 112). It can be the precursor to language—deep thought finding its way to the surface in the orality of words. As van Manen (1997) asserts, in "our own groping for the right words we sense the limits of our personal language" (p. 112). It is here in the place of our limits, when we are at our end, or at the edge of ourselves, that the "poiesis," or a "bringing-forth" is inevitable (Heidegger, 1977/1993b, p. 317); it is where poetry can serve as a post to orient us back to ourselves. I believe Gadamer (1975/2013) expresses this point best:

> Poetry, too, often becomes a test of what is true, that the poem awakens a secret life in words that had seemed to be used up and worn out, and tells us of ourselves. Obviously language can do all this because it is not a creation of reflective thought, but itself helps to fashion the world orientation in which we live. (p. 466)

As exhibited in poems extracted from my experience in the gardens of a woman's meeting, a tourist city, and a writing group, language—spoken or not—gives us a chance, an opportunity, a pathway to being in the world as ourselves.

Writing is an act of creating, or an act of building, in which each thought adds the structure of the conversation within the writing. It is a process—a continual progression, an evolution of growth, which is one of the prime reasons I keep a journal. As Shaw (2007) explains, the "writing grows at its own pace, in its own form" (p. 94); and, "the creativity is [not] always carefully planned and programmed" (p. 95).

> As a writer, as a keeper of a daily reflective journal, I find that as soon as I put words and ideas onto paper in my notebook, or type them into my computer, they begin to gather themselves more images, more words, and ideas. As I write I have the sensation of being at the center of a small vortex of enlarging connections. … My writing grows at its own pace, in its own form. …This process is so integral to my thinking and living. I often say that if I should lose my current journal, filled with intensely personal responses and events and emotions and ideas I would feel that I had lost a part of myself. (Shaw, 2007, pp. 93–94)

In other words, the evolution of growth is not just the building of the written content—from one word to one sentence to one paragraph to one composition, but it also includes the growth, or development, of the woman as she expresses herself in her own words, with her own meaning of self in the journal.

The Process: Writing as a Journey

> When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. (Psalm 94:18-19)

A journey can take on many forms. Yet, the first task in any journey is the decision to take the first step and begin the process; and, like every other journey, being a journal writer is not a welcomed gesture at every juncture of the writing experience. The process is pleasant at times and grueling at others, matching the gesture that anything associated with creativeness, or a bringing forth, through writing may require the existence of dichotomy, or contrast. For instance, through her own journal writing, Bowles (1994) acknowledges that the journey of journal writing includes a mindfulness

of self, contradiction, and the external presence of others:

> My journals make me mindful of just how many roles we play as women—we are workers, lovers, nurturers, artists, wives. They also reflect shifting senses of self, as I tussle with ideas of an essential self, and a divided self (a female world of feeling, a male world of action, a public self devoted to social change, a contemplative self who needs solitude), and a search for balance in a nondichtomous, integrated self. Self-knowledge, my journals tell me, comes both though others and in aloneness. (p. 259)

Like Bowles (1994), women, through their writing, come to an understanding that "self and language are not illusions, but emerging realities" (p. 259). The process of writing is a centering tool that "calls on two skills that are so different that they usually conflict with each other: creating and criticizing" (Elbow, 1998b, p. 7). As English and Gillen (2001) describe, the journal can be defined as an art and a science:

> As an art, a journal is a product or expression of what is more than ordinary experience; it is a creative and imaginative way of describing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. As a science, a journal helps the writer to engage in reflection intentionally and systematically. (p. 2)

As realities emerge, I, as a woman writer exploring the depths of myself, must 1) "let go" of certain dispositions concerning myself to create and 2) allow any diverging opinions about myself to constructively criticize. The pathway of my life, though varied, is accepted and meaningful.

Curriculum Vitae

The years once lived—
a curriculum vitae—
holds my life's pathway.
(S. Riley, 2016)

At ten, I ate to comfort the feelings of sadness—a beloved pet mistakenly killed by another beloved pet; yet with poetry and forgiveness, I regained my stance. At 14, I ate to comfort the feelings of loss—my grandfather died of cancer; yet, with poetry and

forgiveness, I regained my stance. At 18, I ate to comfort the feelings of unfamiliarity—my family was in Maryland and I was in Ohio attending college with strangers; yet, with poetry and forgiveness, I regained my stance. At 35, I ate to comfort the feelings of neglect—I was a wife in a marriage in which I was not enough; yet with poetry and forgiveness, I regained my stance. At 39, I ate to comfort the feelings of challenge—I was a divorcee rebuilding her life; and, yet, with poetry and forgiveness, I regained my stance. At 45, I regained my stance; though, I am still working to release the words I did not use. The thin self protected by the thick self, holding on to the words that built the weighted stones, the barriers, I no longer need or intend to continue to build; and, so I have come to a place of silence in a space of poetry and forgiveness to enter the wildness of who I am. I aim to write beyond the feelings I want to eat—for with poetry nestled in forgiveness, I found a space for my personal, internally cared for stance, letting myself feel the movements of the dances in the garden of who I am.

This course of my life story is one of many stories told by women who choose food as a source of comfort. Though, from the time of tasting the delicious flavors to the moments after devouring the food, we realize we are no longer comforted once the morsels are swallowed. At this point, our words are smothered and overtaken by empty calories that our body did not want and/or could not use regardless of how healthy or unhealthy we ate.

Eating our feelings, or caring for ourselves through food, stifles and/or restricts our creativity internally and silences our words externally. Of course, we are able to function in the world with others, weighted; yet, the something of *who we really are* is always missing or somehow one step behind. Our voices lagging, suspended in time,

waiting for the moment—the right moment—to express ourselves, all-the-while losing ourselves to the invisibility of hiding, refusing, neglecting our words. This place is where the *lectio divina*, poetry and journal enter in the process. This place is where our bodies—our personal gardens—accept the space to move from the expressive to the poetic as we build and create new moments of pause to cultivate our gardens and stay the course of our lives.

The Purpose: Writing from the Expressive to the Poetic

> Do not fear, O [Sonya]; do not let your hands hang limp. The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

Journal writing is a form of writing that brings self, the writer's self, into a journey with language and language into a journey with l.o.v.e—a lyrical operative voice of expression. For many women, "journals play an important role in…helping them regain their voice" (Peterson & Jones, 2001, p. 59), or the ability to express themselves.

As a journal writer, in particular, a woman's writing functions in the expressive; yet, as a creative journal writer, the poetic also comes to play. She is using language in between the roles of spectator and participant (Britton et al., 1975). As a spectator, language is used "to recount or recreate real or imagined experience for no other reason then to enjoy it or present if for enjoyment" (Britton et al., p. 92). As a participant, language is used "to get things done [and] to recount or recreate real or imagined experience in order to inform or teach or to make plans or solicit help or to achieve any other practical outcome" (Britton et al., p. 92). She, the woman journal writer, is thinking aloud on paper, while devising personal lyrics to express and present her thoughts, allowing herself to move from the expressive to the poetic.

Like for many other journal writers, the journal becomes "a tool … used to help [me] move beyond the status quo" (Peterson & Jones, 2001, p. 62) as I sort through the understanding of what I am experiencing and/or who I am. The journal, via the process of writing, encourages me to create and open myself to the possibilities of existing in the now, embracing who I am without apologies. As a woman creating, the journal is a place of solace, a place where I am poet/playwright/storyteller tackling the issues of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, releasing the emotional epitaphs of the heart, and birthing the ambitions of my inward spirit. Through the journal, I am a woman writing—a female engaging with others and myself through the written word to create an existence, a bridge of some sorts, between my internal world and the world's external one. This bridge creates a pathway for me to travel this thing called life, connecting with other women writers—who like me are passionate about their need to write and embrace their womanhood—to breathe, inhaling and exhaling, through each stroke of the writing utensil across various canvases forming words that allow them to live.

Peterson and Jones (2001) explain, "Journaling is unique in that it makes apparent the connection among life events, ideas, emotions, and the language used to express all three" (p. 61). It provides a platform for women to self-create (Dowrick, 2009; Schiwy, 1994; Sutton, 2004).

> Journal writing is not only a process of self-recording, self-exploration, and self-expression, although it is all of these. It is also a channel of self-creation. We create ourselves in the very process of writing about ourselves and our lives. (Schiwy, 1994, p. 234)

With the movement of the hand, the writer's thoughts are dictated and created into text. The hand becomes the conduit—providing a channel from the internal to the external. The hands give us, women journal writers, the ability to create our words externally—our

zest to create extends through the bodily technology of the hands—as a functional, giving entity that aids the focusing of our mind to create. As Levin (2003) writes, "The hands therefore can give to Being our gift of thought whenever they handle things with appropriate skill, and with care for their being" (p. 126). In a sense, journal writing, via the hand, illuminates the *heart*, or center of our thoughts. Through the practice of journal writing, women are reasserting/reconfirming/reaffirming/reiterating/and restating themselves—as though developing several personal lyrics, or "any fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling" (Abrams, 2012, p. 201).

In essence, Dewey (1910/2012) defines reflective thought as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 5). Within his definition lies the argument that reflection is an important part of learning primarily because of its "active" and "persistent" nature. Both words—active and persistent—are key terms in developing one's skill as a contemplative and creative journal writer. The writing, both in the function and the object, becomes the personal agreement, or contract, with self to allow daily a deeper reflection that can lead to an understanding and a merging of the new self with the old. Thus, I am oriented as a woman-writer-poet who is deeply interested in studying the phenomenon of writing, transformative in nature, as a lived experience in a setting for learning about self—such as a workshop, seminar, circle of women, or in one's room alone. I am committed to the process of writing (in particular poetry), prayer, and creative journaling as a contemplative practice transforming our lives, leading us home to those internal and

external places of our gardens that connect us to the divine, the earth, others, and/or ourselves.

Within the Sandy Area: Unearthing the Phenomenon

When I think of a sandy area, like a beach, sandbox, or sand garden, I see an image of an open area filled with a gritty light greyish or brownish dirt substance. With the naked eye, the beauty is found in the surrounding areas showcasing aspects of water, not just the sand. On the beach, seashells are buried in the grips of its depths and waves ride the oceanic waters to its shores. Within the sandbox, demonstrations of pristine castles and buckets of water and shovels press against its foundation. Along the sand garden, the paths are laid with rocks, flowing water structures, pruned trees, and unexpected lilies. Yet, with a magnifying glass, the beauty is found in each grain of sand, which reflects a dry richness of colored crystal. Either with the naked eye or the magnifying glass, the beauty of the sandy areas invites me, the partaker, into a poetic moment of creation inspired by both the well-moistened and dry areas of my life. These moments are intentional, methodical, and often times messy as my subjective self and objective self engage and impact the notion of my present day self.

Even now, as I reflect on my moments in and around sandy areas, I think about the various journal-writing journeys I have taken to discover, re-discover, and answer the inquiry of who am I. For the most part, this path to understand self is complex and reflective. The journey is focused usually on the Who am I? question; and, its activities are rooted in thoughtfulness (deep thinking), commitment (dedication), process (practice), and bodily engagement (action). Thus, phenomenological inquiry is the best

methodical structure for answering my research question, **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

Van Manen (1997) provides six research activities as the phenomenological methodical structure, which I discuss in chapter three: 1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interest us and commits us to the world; 2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; 3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; 4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting; 5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and 6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (pp. 30-31).

In brief, chapter one, the turning to the phenomenon, provides me a space to discuss the personal stories behind my abiding concern and reveal the deep questioning I have concerning the creative journaling pause. Chapter two, the lived experience of the creative journaling pause, allows an investigation of the phenomenon through the life stories of other women who journal and create. Chapter three provides a philosophical and methodological grounding that leads to a plan of engagement for my research. The remaining chapters, chapter four and chapter five, derived from the study serve to reveal the essential themes from the lifeworld texts provided by the participants, the women of the study, as well as discuss the pedagogical implications of a creative journaling pause (the phenomenon).

Found

In the sand garden,
I found her again—
shaping her own grains,
creating her own castle—smiling at me, writing.

I found her again
playing with water internally—
His water,
entangled with mine.

I found her again
within myself on the page externally
I am who I am supposed to be—
me.

I found her again—
Me, Myself and I.
(S. Riley, 2015)

I found her again—me, myself, and I. In taking the time to withdraw and contemplate, renewal is a possibility. The often short, but dedicated amount of time allows for a remembrance or a recollection of something lost. The internal gathering of thought and the external expression of words and images can bring us to a place called home deep within ourselves. The next chapter presents women who pause and express themselves through written words and symbols. Their life stories are told through novels, plays, poetry, autobiographies, journals, educational literature, and conversations to unearth the phenomenon of a creative journal pause.

CHAPTER TWO:
EXISTENTIAL INVESTIGATION
PAUSING IN THE SAND GARDEN

> Journal writing is a supreme way to record your own life's journey. It is a way to discover what matters to you and even what and how you think. It is a glorious self-directed source of inner development, yet it also makes the world beyond your own self more real and more vivid. It can become an interface between you and the outside world. It can become a companion but doesn't judge. It can be a place of discovery, of learning, of emotional relief and insight. It can also become a playground, where the everyday rules of writing, reflecting, problem solving, goal setting, production, and planning no longer apply. (Dowrick, 2009, p. 2)

Like Celie and Margaret, two fictional female characters in the books *The Color Purple* (Walker, 1982) and *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (Blume, 1970), respectively, I too write to God. Within each paragraph of my journal (at times referred to as a diary), the words present God with an array of thoughts, concerns, and desires from me—Sonya. As Dowrick (2009) describes, my journals hold the internal and external aspects of my life—my personal sand gardens, or playgrounds, in which to create, explore, think, and rest, through and with the words and images of my life-story.

As a child, the action of writing-in-my-journal provided a secure, anchored lifeline between the world, God, and myself. The bound journal was the anchor; the writing utensil was the line; the words were the conjured-voiced-energies I like call to life. Within each sentence, word pictures would form to caress my emotional expressions—sadness hugged with hope; fear knighted with courage; doubt kissed with belief. For me, writing was a peaceful means to share my true, authentic self and hone myself as a person. Even to this day, as an adult, the journal is a living reprieve for me. It is a living sanctuary of sorts where God and I "hang-out" chatting about life in my journal, my letters to him, and His Bible, his letter to me. It is one of the places where I am found in His presence seeking to understand who I am. In the pages of my journal, I

do not fear discomfort or ignore doubt or suppress the raw silliness summoned by pure happiness; God is not moved by my humanness, or the flawed individual that I am. I am accepted as I am. It is there within the boundaries of our conversation I am unmasked, resting, holding on to the lifeline between God and myself.

Woman, Warrior Soar

Heavenly Father,
Is that your voice calling me?
…within my conscience.

A loving safe voice,
reaching me—sweetly divine,
I am not afraid.

An unfamiliar—
but familiar call to self,
I turn to the wild.

There wilderness stands,
in front of me colorful.
Free in you, I walk.

Resuscitated—
Toward you I am drawn,
life-filled, breathing.

As an eagle soars,
I am flying bountiful—
Grounded in your Word.

I am a warrior—
a woman writing her path
erect.
Inner wellspring gives.

The words come dancing,
as I pray, Lord, I am Yours—
Lead me not astray.

Silently I walk,
following the butterfly,
Your Word I await.

In the beginning,
The Word became flesh; I
thirst—
Your water I sip.

Resting in your care,
Like the lilies of the field,
Erect I stand.

Abundantly loved.
Praying and writing the
words—
Me—a lily—I am.

Heavenly Father,
I pray myself to your Will.
Woman, Warrior soar
(S. Riley, 2014)

Each of my journals is a creative personal support and inspirational gathering, where God and I meet in a sand garden sanctuary of sorts—a common ground, or our playground. The journal is the place where I can make creative imprints on the sand, or journal paper, while (a) focusing my attention in a particular area of my life, and (b) nurturing my being as I think through the words and images used to embrace—or not—particular areas of my life through actions of play, reflection, contemplation, silence and talk. It is the place for "finding direction, for understanding self, and for keeping things in balance" (Moon, 2006, p. 82).

At times, through the process of expressing myself on paper, I am taming, or refining, my internal lioness, the instinctive part of me, that sometimes questions the actual existence of my being in the world (*Am I being true to who I am?)* or calming my mind, the thinking part of me, that sometimes is unnerved or thinking too fast. At other times, I am developing platforms to engage my thoughts about particular topics for a course assignment. Yet, at other times, I am just journaling—just playing in my portable "sand garden" sanctuary, the journal. No matter the reason, in my journal, I am pausing, withdrawing myself to care for myself, develop myself, and embrace myself in specific prayerful thoughts of the past, present, and future; I am creatively journaling.

In this chapter, I continue the discussion of creative journaling as a practice of pause or withdrawal while: 1) exploring and interpreting the phenomenon through the voices/influences of others (people and things) such as personal, civic, and cultural artifacts—literature (both fiction and non-fiction), poetry (which includes my own), film excerpts, songs, journal entries; and, 2) inserting "lived experience material into the text" (van Manen, 2014, p. 377). This investigative journey continues the inquiry of **What is**

the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause? As an interplay between the text, each section of this chapter yields to quotes, biblical stories, and inserted poetry as moments of pause—those moments used as reference points to provide a moment of rest, a moment of thought, a moment of creating an understanding of the text before and after its insertion.

Creative Journaling: A Space for Play

> A child does not behave in a purely symbolic fashion in play; rather he wishes and realizes his wishes by letting the basic categories of reality pass through his experience. The child, in wishing, carries out his wishes. In thinking, he acts. Internal and external actions are inseparable: imagination, interpretation, and will are the internal processes carried by external action. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 100)

Since my first encounter with Vygotsky's (1978) assertion, I have been intrigued with the power of play and its motivational aspects and developmental qualities in the lives of adults and children. Either with one person or multiples, the practice of play invokes and encourages creativity in individuals that is free flowing, yet structured; simple and plain, yet inspired.

From an etymological perspective, the German words for "play," *plegan* (meaning to "occupy oneself about") and *pflegen* (meaning to "take care of, cultivate") and the Old English word *plega* (meaning "quick motion; recreation, exercise, and any brisk activity") (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=play) allow for a deeper understanding of "play" as a committed feature or performance in life. This sense of play signifies a brief period of time in which to cultivate and take care of one's self or others. Within those etymological frames, the word "play" can be defined as a verb, "to act or conduct oneself in a specified way" (American Heritage, 2002, p. 1068) and as a noun, an "activity engaged in for enjoyment or recreation" (American Heritage, 2002, p. 1068).

As Vygotsky (1978) renders, play is the meshing of one's imagination, interpretation, and will—"the internal process carried by external actions" (p.100). It is a person engaged in creative journaling, playing in her sand garden, mindfully cultivating or taking care of herself through the words and images that play with her thoughts, expelling themselves through her hand, touching the sand with imprints of her heart. The playful action renders her as she is seriously engaged in thought, captivated by the role she plays in her own life as gardener; she who tends the soil (her body, mind, and spirit)—nurturing her body, renewing her mind, and building her spirit. As gardener, she is engaged in the sacred poetic practice of allowing, or letting, herself be—engaging with the sand, the paper, as her creative understanding unfolds through her intentional action to pause playfully.

In the play *Othello*, Shakespeare (1962/1997) reminds us that we are our own gardeners, choosing what we will or will not plant, do, accomplish, perform, achieve, participate, or play in our lives: "Our bodies are gardens, to which our wills are gardeners" (p.156). Thus, a woman who journals is a woman resolved to play in her journal, her personal sand garden, digging deeper into the structure of who she is as herself. She tends to the soil, her ground—the coarse earthiness of herself hidden, concealed within her body housing her mind and sheltering her spirit. This decision, she makes, allows her being to will herself to play. Thus, the questions continue: What will play encourage in her life? How will the sand, the pages of her journal, yield themselves to her body, mind, and spirit?

Grounded Fingers: Playing in the Sand

> Who has lived so many years that he cannot bring back his baby days for a moment and recall the dear delight that once he felt in playing with earth and sand? Who does not remember the cool touch of the soft earth, the pleasant cohesion of its particles, and the ease with which it could be smoothed and patted into shape; and who can ever forget the happy days by the sea-shore, the long stretches of hard, wet beach—fit drawing board for giants—and the shining white heaps above the tideline where we played for hours together? …we builded [sic] once upon a time. (Smith & Wiggin, 1900/1896, p. 290)

Smith and Wiggin's (1900/1896) description illuminates the feeling of a youthful experience—engaging with nature, playing with sand, a fit drawing board for giants. As adults, a remembrance of our youthful imaginative, "once upon a time," experiences can help us reconnect with the joys of living, of building, of risking, or attempting, to seize the moment, meshing our imagination, interpretation, and will with the reality of living in the now. The playful wet beach description resurrects possibilities, or personal information, that there are common areas, or gardens, in our lives in which to create. From my perspective, childhood accounts, explanations, reasons, or enlightenments render themselves conducive to whom we are as creative and inquisitive human beings, individuals, and females in the world as adults. Each version exists to provide pebbledashes for us to crawl, to walk, to run from one adventure of our lives to the next. As Smith and Wiggin (1900/1896) assert, "The yielding sand affords the most suitable material which can be found for the purpose [of constructing], … as it offers practically no resistance to hand and will" (p. 298). The creative journal, like the sand, is forever yielding its pages to us for the purpose of building, constructing, composing, for in its presence, my fingers are grounded. As an adult, once a child, I play with the letter forming words released through my hand in collaboration with my will, still amazed, still filled with glee, still free to be me—playing.

Philosopher, biblical student, and education reformer Froebel (1887) asserts, “The plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of all later life; for the whole man is developed and shown in these, in this tenderest [sic] dispositions, in his innermost tendencies” (p. 55). This belief was not just Froebel’s assertion, but also his effort for all children. In 1840, it was he who “organized the method of infant education” (Froebel, 1887, p. xi) called “Kindergarten,” a garden for children. Its aim was “to strengthen and develop productive activity” (Smith & Wiggins, 1900/1896, p. 9) through the activities of a child that were used for play, for producing, for shaping, for knowledge, for society, and for cultivating the ground. In focusing specifically on play, its significance for children and/or adults is based on “the development of creative self-activity” (p. 2), while serving to interpret the external world and provide adequate expression to a person’s internal world (Froebel, 1887; Smith & Wiggins, 1900/1896). Through self-activity, an individual’s whole self is active at all times, which means “the activity should enlist [her] entire self in all phases of being” (Froebel, 1887, p. 11). Thus, play—or child/adult moments of recreation, pause, release, or withdrawal—accentuates the understanding that play is not thoughtless, but instead thoughtful. It is an opportunity to appreciate the fusion of reality and the imagined. It is a chance to envision, foresee, and visualize what could be. As Froebel (1887) so brilliantly describes and admonishes, play is:

> … the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this age [as a child], and at the same time, typical of human life as a whole—of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things. It gives therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. It holds the sources of all that is good. ...play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance. …the spontaneous play of the child discloses the future inner life of the man. (p. 55)

Now as an adult in my forties, I still cherish the moments I had as a child writing, pretending to be a writing teacher, a publisher, a screenwriter, a journalist, an author, a

playwright, and a poet. For in those moments of play, I discovered my need to self-reflect through words written on a page first before I spoke. This action of writing slowed my thoughts (which are filled with words and images), gathered them, and relaxed me. As a quiet, reflective, visual learner, I learned to nurture my opinions, thoughts and ideas through the written symbols formed and orchestrated by the movement of my hand. With grounded fingers as opposed to flying lips, I embraced my need to write a poem as a precursor to creating a writing assignment, giving a presentation, or leading a class discussion. Even today, writing surfaces or canvases, such as journal pages and computer screens, are the sand in which my fingers are grounded; the journal and computer are my gardens, my sand gardens, in which I am able to play, grounding my actions in creative journaling.

For the most part, play "is a thing of beauty best appreciated by experiencing it" (Brown, 2009, p. 15). For me, it includes the sacredness of being at ease, of just being, of embracing "being" as it is, which allows for the meshing of one's imagination, interpretation, and will—a comfortableness of reality in the imagined. As Gadamer (1975/2013) asserts:

> More important, play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness. …The player himself knows that play is only play and that it exists in a world determined by the seriousness of purposes. But he does not know this in such a way that, as a player, he actually *intends* this relation to seriousness. (p. 107)

In adhering to Gadamer's (1975/2013) words, as a creative journal writer, I am the player who knows her moment of writing. Forming words with alphabetic letters and drawing images is a moment of creating new sand garden experiences, *is* a moment of pause, *is* a moment of withdrawal, *is* a moment of play. Thus, I will myself to enter worlds I imagine in the horizons of my interpretative realities; and, I let go and just let myself be. Yet, also

deep down within me, I know that "in playing, all those purposive relations that determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but are curiously suspended" (Gadamer, p. 107). At that point of suspension, I am no longer concerned with the outside influences of the world. Instead, I am engrossed in the pleasure of the text—the "moment when my body pursues its own ideas" (Barthes, 1975, p. 17) and my writing utensil is just a conduit for my hands to release the symbols that express my contemplations from within the depths of my being. Some things I already know; and, some things I must allow to be discovered, uncovered, and brought forth as my grounded fingers write in the sand (pages) of my garden (journal). However so, I am still amazed, still filled with glee, still free to be me—playing. Therefore, now I wonder: What about this garden, this sand garden from which I play, inspires me to write? to explore? to pause in the present and take time to acknowledge I exist?

The Sand Garden: The Creative Journal

The journal is a thing, or an object, used to capture, or hold, moments and express thoughts; yet, it is also a type of technology used to create, produce, craft, and bring forth. Therefore, like any object used to hold, express, or create, it is essential not to "overlook the aesthetic pleasure of keeping a journal" (Schiwy, 1996, p. 54). The beautiful feeling of opening and actively engaging in a journal that reflects a lovely space, or space of love, is paramount to the eternal flow of one's internal thoughts. Dowrick (2009) asserts, "Choosing your first or next journal (and all your subsequent ones) is itself very much part of the creative journal-writing experience" (p. 53). It is acknowledging your self as the creative one, decision maker, and owner of the words and images that express the beauty of your being.

For instance, Baldwin (1991) highlights the importance of "creating your own journal style" (p. 29).

> There is a little of the fetish in each of us, and it often emerges while devising the "perfect" arrangement for journal-keeping. …This attention to the physical details of journals and journal writing may sound facetious, but it is meant in earnest. In journal writing we allow ourselves to venture deep into the writing process, and the kind of notebook, paper, and writing instrument we use will either foster or hinder our progress. (pp. 29-30)

Journaling is an experience of the whole self as the writing utensil is used to embody the thoughts of the creator, the composer, the writer—the journal is an extension of self. As individuals who journal, "we experience a pleasure that is part of journal keeping when we create a form uniquely our own" (Baldwin, 1991, p. 30). When we take the time to purchase or build a sand garden (our journals) and gather the tools, or utensils, that will enhance our associations with how the journal is used, we are making the effort to support what "feels comfortable and works with [our] lifestyle and personality" (Grason, 2005, p. 7). For the most part, "this is not about getting fancy or expensive; it's about creating a pleasurable link to the object you [a]re writing in" (Baldwin, 1991, p. 30). It is about taking the time to enhance one's inclination to write by putting "some care into choosing paper and a pen" (Schiwy, 1996, p. 54).

> The paper we write on, the book we write in are not just arbitrary raw materials. They are companions on the writing journey. … The same thing is true of pens. Some will feel better in your hand than others. … Experiment. Enjoy the freedom to play, to indulge your sense of whimsy, to switch to a different size of book, to another color of ink. … Find paper and pen that delight you. …The choice is yours. Have fun. (Schiwy, 1996, pp. 54-58)

Therefore, "the secret is to find your own style" (Solly & Llyod, 1989, p. 6) in the type of journal and utensils you need by taking notice of "what best helps you have the conversation with yourself that you want" (Baldwin, 2007/1990, p. 5). Thus, as expressed

in my poem *Creative Journal*, we must pause to examine the poetic, or uplifting, questions of our hearts to find the bounded pages that will become our creative journal, or sand gardens, wherein we erect our own sand castles, the effigies of our life stories.

Creative Journal

I have questions when,
entering the sand garden,
blank pages of grit.

What tools do I need?
Can I build with what I have?
Do I feel beauty?

Am I free to write?
Can I build my sand castle?
Where must I begin?

Choosing the bound page
that expresses who I am—
no sorry needed.

Creative Journal—
Outside in or Inside out,
I find myself safe
in the opening of this space *and* within the writing of this place.
(S. Riley, 2015)

Each journal becomes a holder of our beauty, a receptacle of our creative existence. As Psalms 139 suggests, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Holy Bible KJV, Psalms 139:14, p. 966). Our beauty is the magnificence of us as transactional, expressive, and poetic individuals dwelling within the world—communal individuals, unique and self-reflecting individuals participating in a creative journaling pause.

The sand castle: Being a participant and spectator in the sand garden. The actions of "opening" and "writing" are two different functions in creative journaling. Opening a journal is opening a space to pause and wait. Whereas, writing in the journal is

writing in a place of active withdrawal—a place grounded in the traces of particular and/or random thoughts made known through the various strokes of a writing utensil. It is the act of using our hands to create a moment of pause as we dwell, or build, our creative journals one image and one word at a time. As we mature as writers, our writing may move back and forth between three functional writing categories—to and from the positions of transactional, expressive, and poetic (Britton et al., 1975; Evans & Pennebaker, 2014) effortlessly over time. In distinguishing between the three categories, I believe the words of Adams (2013), Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) and Evans and Pennebaker (2014) help to define each of the functions separately.

Transactional writing is the language used "to get things done: to inform people (telling them what they need or want to know or what we think they ought to know), to advise or persuade or instruct people" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 88). It is the writing that allows the creative journal writer to decide with whom she will "complete an exchange of her thoughts, beliefs, and feelings" (Evans & Pennebaker, 2014, p. 122)—with herself and/or another individual or individuals. It is the kind of writing that sets rigid conventional boundaries based on grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules, keeps an audience in mind, and communicates a succinct message. The key is transaction. For instance, it can be described as a letter with a salutation, body, and closing that "offers an exchange of some value, meets the expectation of another, or completes an obligation" (Evans & Pennebaker, 2014, p. 122). Unlike the transactional writing, expressive writing is less rigid.

Expressive writing is the "thinking aloud on paper" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 88) kind of writing. This kind of writing allows for self-expression and adheres to

conventions for comprehension, but is not confined to its rigidness. Also known as emotional writing, expressive writing has a sole purpose of allowing the writer to be honest and open with her self. The term, expressive writing, "generally refers to the disclosure or release of emotions, traumatic memories, secrets, and other disempowering thoughts and feelings" (Adams, 2013, p. 28); the thoughts and feelings expressed, however, do not have to be disempowering. The key is expression. For example, Britton et al. (1975) suggest, expressive writing can be described in the following three ways: (a) a diary entry "that attempts to record and explore the writer's feelings, mood, opinions, preoccupations of the moment" (p. 88); (b) "personal letters written to friends or relations for the purpose of maintaining contact with them" (p. 88); or (c) a text, or "writing intended to be read by a public audience" (pp. 89-90) where the writer decides to approach the reader as a personal friend. However, unlike transactional and expressive writing, poetic writing is always a created piece of word art.

Poetic writing is "a verbal construct, an 'object' made out of language" (Britton et al, 1975, p. 90). Language is used as an art medium (Britton et al, 1975). The words and their context are specifically selected and arranged to form a pattern—a piece of poetic writing. It serves as an object that satisfies the writer or creator and evokes a response of shared satisfaction from the reader or audience (Evans & Pennebaker, 2014). Using figurative language and narrative structures, poetic writing expresses the positives and negatives of the human condition. The key is bringing forth, creating text through metaphor, analogy, and imaginative descriptions of settings and time. This type of writing "may include—but is not limited to—writing a poem or a narrative" (Evans & Pennebaker, 2014, p. 129).

On the one end of the writing spectrum, the transactional writer plays a participant role as she uses language to achieve, or accomplish, any practical outcome such as completing a task, retelling or reconstructing "a real or imagined experience in order to inform or teach," or to "make plans or solicit help" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 92). As a writer, she is "concerned in her writing to enmesh with her reader's relevant knowledge, experience, interests; and, the reader is at liberty to contextualize what he finds relevant selectively" (p. 94). Whereas, the poetic writer is situated on the other end of the writing spectrum, playing the spectator role as she uses "language to recount or to recreate real or imagined experience for no other reason than to enjoy it or present it for enjoyment" (p. 92). As a writer, she is "concerned to create relations internal to the work, and achieve a unity, a construct discrete from actuality" (p. 94); the reader and writer form a global contextualization (p. 94). However, in the middle of the writing spectrum, the expressive writer is neither spectator nor participant, but both (Britton et al., 1975). In this role as writer, she is able "to move freely from one role to the other, across a boundary which is, at this central point, a shadowy one" (p. 92). Like expressive talking, expressive writing is also relaxed—the external demands from the reader or nature of the writing task—are at a minimum (Britton et al., 1975). Though, it can and will change to something else (either transactional or poetic) depending on the demands, or burdens, of the writing task.

> On the one hand, the demands of a *task*, the need to *do* something by means of language, will, if taken far enough, change the expressive into the transactional. On the other hand, the demands of the *construct*, the urge to *make* something in language and the intricacies of doing so, will, if taken far enough, change the expressive into the poetic. (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975, p. 93)

As a creative journal writer, a woman finds herself embedded in the alchemy of her words and images; the roles of spectator and/or participant are contingent upon her

ability to express herself genuinely. For instance, both Frame (2014) and Frank (1952/1993) were diarists, or journal writers, who created their journal entries daily or more often than not; each recording their daily lives and including creative artifacts like poems written by others and/or themselves; each commemorating the start of her journal practice; each creating imaginative characters to whom they address their thoughts. Frame also created an imaginative place over which her character ruled. Frame (2014) writes:

> I began to write a diary, agreeing with the convention and aware that diarists began with 'Dear Diary;' yet thinking such a form of address to be absurd, I compromised by writing 'Dear Mr. Ardenue,' Mr. Ardenue being pictured as a kindly old man with long, grey beard and 'smiling' eyes, who ruled over the Land of Ardenue, which I celebrated in a poem. Where before I had written most of my verse about the world around me, I now focused on the Land of Ardenue, which I could [see] people as I wished. …In the creation of Ardenue I gave name and thus a certainty to a new inner 'My Place.' (pp. 138-139)

Whereas, similarly, Frank (1952/1993) writes:

> It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary. …Still, what does it matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart. …And now I come to the root of the matter, the reason for my starting a diary: it is that I have no such real friend. …but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Kitty. (pp. 2-3)

For both writers, the journal is a creative place to express without judgment; it is their named friend, or confidante; it is the place of pause to share their "deep" and "inner" expressions of self. Each diary proves to be a saving grace—a kind element that awaits each woman at every point of pause in her life. Now deceased, both writers (through their respective books) continue to invite others to experience the rescuing and transformational moments of writing; the moments when nothing matters except words, images, and a canvas upon which to write; the moments when writing nurtures wounds and clears thoughts.

The sand castle: Accepting the space to create a place of pause. The beach is a communal space filled with sand, a ready-made sand garden (if you will) that allows individuals to rest in a particular place, a place of pause. The rest, though at times still, is active always—an individual is sleeping, while breathing; floating, while moving with the waves; lounging in a beach chair, while reading a book; lying on the beach while thinking; or kneeling in the sand, while building a sand castle. Each rest is an active moment of involving oneself in the multiple dynamics of beach life; the personal and communal interlock. Each rest is an acceptance of the vessel offering a moment of respite; limits and flexibility interlock. Each rest embraces a sustainable pause that allows life to open and create. The spacious beach opens into an individualized area, or place for a sand garden; the sand garden opens into a sand castle; a sand castle opens, uncovering our imaginative thoughts into an externalized place for others to see and know and maybe understand our ideas of beauty hidden in the sand. It is here we accept the space and place to be and become.

Taun (1977) asserts that "[t]he ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition" (p. 6) while continuing to honor the separate meaning of each—"place is security" (p. 3) and "space is freedom" (p. 3). This coupling of two ideas, or concepts, can provide a deeper understanding of what it means for us to enjoin, or direct, our lives within the parameters of ideas, principles, beliefs, and, most of all, the values of who we are as individuals. A thoughtful understanding of who we are is to recognize that "to be in the world, to be situated at all, is to be in place" (Casey, 2009/1993). Each space allows for movement; and, each ceasing moment in space allows a rest, a pause—a moment of rest just to be and become in a particular place.

> From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan, 1977, p. 6)

The mind is the beach (the communal space of thoughts, ideas, feelings); the bounded journal book of blank pages is the sand garden; the journal page is the sand; the words and images are the sandcastles. The space becomes our place to be; and, our place to be becomes our space to just be our individual selves, uncovered, breathing—inhaling, exhaling—while becoming.

I AM Uncovered

The journal opens.
Writing flows, images drawn
living in the pause.
Transaction. Expressive. Poetic.
Whimsical writing—
we uncover ourselves,
standing in the I AM of whom we are
internalize beauty,
externalized outward—
ourselves on the page for others to know.
Inhale. Exhale. We breathe.
(S. Riley, 2015)

The journal, itself, is the space that opens a place for us to pause actively, resting freely assured in continual movement and foreseen growth. In a sense, the journal and diary are two ideas that provide a space for movement, transforming location into a place; a place of rest, a pause; a pause to be or become the I AM of who we are within the present moment of time. Often used interchangeably, the journal and diary—like space and place—require each other in definition while continuing to honor the separate meaning of each.

The word "journal," according to The American Heritage College Dictionary (2002), is derived from the Latin word *diurnalis*, meaning "daily" (p. 749). A journal is "a personal record of occurrences, experiences and reflections kept on a regular basis; a diary" (p. 749). On the other hand, the word "diary" is derived from the Latin word *diarium*, meaning "daily allowance, daily journal" (p. 392). A diary is "a daily record, esp. a personal record of events, experiences, and observation; a journal" (p. 392). Together, the combined ideas of the journal-diary provide a deeper understanding of creative journaling within the considerations offered in a pause.

For the most part, creative journaling or purposeful journal writing is a blend between two extremes—the personal diary (I-centered) and the class notebook (subject centered) (Fulwiler, 2002). For instance, Fulwiler (2002) suggests the following as an explanation of the two extremes:

> At the one extreme you find diaries, which are private accounts of a writer's thoughts and feelings and which may include more writing about emotion than intellect. …At the other extreme are documents such as class notebooks, which are recordings of other people's ideas. (p. 43)

Both the diary and journal provide a corridor to transactional, expressive, and poetic writing. Both lead to the opening of one's feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Both encourage an opportunity to play while meshing our imagination, interpretation, and will. Both let individuals be who they are while again resting in an understanding that "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Holy Bible KJV, Psalms 139:14, p. 966). Ultimately, both allow for the experience of a compassionate indwelling of one's self while in the world with others.

Though creative journaling does require entering a space to set a boundary for a place of pause within one's life, it also requires fluidity, flexibility, and elasticity—a

resistance to anything that prevents endurance and the challenge to move forward in life. Hence, the constant discussion about the differences between the diary and the journal is invalid in this conversation of creative journaling. The need to set a dichotomous tone of either/or, separation, and estrangement is eliminated. Neither the diary nor the journal is insignificant, the lessor of the two, or the less significant other. The focus, for us, is mindfully pausing whether or not we use the word diary or journal to discuss our creative journal pauses.

The sand castle: An understanding of mindfulness for our moments of pause. Cheung and Nhat Hanh (2010) define mindfulness as "the practice of being fully present in each moment" (p. 2). Similarly, Kabat-Zinn's (1994) writes:

> Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality. It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold only in moments. If we are not fully present for many of those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives but also fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation. (p. 4)

In both explanations, the ritual of being present, fully engaged in the moments of life is underscored. However, Kabat-Zinn (1994) elaborates further with a reminder that if not fully present for many of those life moments, we will distort our "possibilities for growth and transformation" (p. 4). As a sand castle builder, or journal writer, your presence is required. Your thoughts can be in the past, present, and future at any given time; and, yet, the versatility of your thought pattern does not matter if as an active and engaged builder-composer-writer you choose to show up, be visible, and attend to self in the present.

Unfortunately, being mindful of her presence to affect change or growth within herself (and for herself) is not always a priority for a woman who must and /or needs to

multi-task. She is too busy participating in the needs and wants of others that she neglects her own "skin"—also described as "pelt," "soul home," "soulskin," and "the state of being in oneself," (Estes, 1995, p. 286). This neglect makes her vulnerable, which leads to an easy and indirect theft of a woman's self as Estes warns:

> The aggravated theft …occurs far more subtly through the theft of a woman's resources and of her time. … It is not exactly the rightness of a person or thing or its wrongness that causes the theft of our soulskins, it is the cost of these things to us. It is what costs us in time, energy, observation, attention, hovering, prompting, instructing, teaching, training. These motions of psyche are like cash withdrawals from the psychic savings account. (p. 288)

Therefore, it is imperative for women to understand how an individual soulskin is lost and why mindfulness is essential to her wellbeing—spiritually, psychically, and physically. Because as Estes explains, "The soulskin vanishes when we fail to pay attention to what we are really doing, and particularly its cost to us" (p. 286).

> We lose soulskin by becoming too involved with ego, by being too exacting, perfectionistic, or unnecessarily martyred, or driven by a blind ambition, or by being dissatisfied—about self, family, community, culture, world—and not saying or doing anything about it, or by pretending we are an unending source for other, or by not doing all we can to help ourselves. (Estes, 1995, p. 287)

Taking notice, or paying attention, to the essential existence of her being will require a woman to involve herself in mindful activities that nurture her creative being. She must be diligent about remembering that "being overdrawn …causes the loss of the skin, and the paling and dulling of one's most acute instincts" (Estes, 1995, p. 288). Consequently, if not careful, the "lack of further deposits of energy, knowledge, acknowledgement, ideas, and excitement" will cause "a woman to feel she is psychically dying" (p. 288). Therefore, she must choose a reboot, or restart, technique that is intentional, loving, structured yet liberating, and poetic. Her transformation can begin

with the act of writing, the ability "to code language into a visible form" (Gee, 2012, p. 38). She must pause; she must journal; she must engage in a creative journal pause.

Grounded Fingers: Pausing in the Sand

> Pause can take many forms as practices in our lives. Some help us focus attention and deeper understanding on self-awareness through intentional learning and growth on our own or with our teams; others help us defocus, rest, connect, or become more resilient and more creative. Still other pause practices help us discern what deserves our attention within and outside of ourselves. (Cashman, 2012, p. 9)

Pause, according to Cashman (2012), is "a universal principle inherent in living, creative systems" (p. 7). It is a resource that is viable to our daily lives; however, it is often unutilized or it is often under-utilized. Therefore, "like any valuable resource, yet unrecognized and therefore neglected, we have to explore and discover its pragmatic uses in order to experience its value-creating impact" (p. 7). The exploration allows us to question; and, the questioning opens areas for us to discover. As we accept pause into our lives, it, in turn, becomes a wellspring of exploration and discovery. As Cashman (2012) asserts, "The Pause Principle is the conscious, intentional process of stepping back, within ourselves and outside ourselves, to lead forward with greater authenticity, purpose, and contribution" (p. 7). By pausing, we position ourselves to lead our lives in alignment with the personal attributes of who we are, as we are, while resting in the **I AM** of who we are. By taking the time to pause in our sand gardens, we give ourselves a moment to embrace ourselves as suggested in the following poem.

I Pause

The sand calls my name.
With grittiness, I respond.
Possible future.

Still breathing, I pause
expecting to grow forward.
Masks are removed.

The weather changes.
Hot cold wet or dry—I AM
unafraid of me.

My name was called.
In the sand gardens, I play—
still embracing me.
(S. Riley, 2015)

From the core, the word pause calls for a breather—a moment of respite to let go or to put, or lay, down or to stop. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, *pause* derives from Old and Middle French, Latin, Greek, and Proto-Indo-European (PIE) (2015, pause). In Old and Middle French, the words for pause are *pauser* and *pausee* (a pause, interruption); in Latin, the words are *pausare* (to halt, cease, pause) and *pausa* (to halt, stop, cessation); in Greek, the words are *pausis* (stopping, ceasing) and *pauein* (to stop, to cause to cease); in PIE, the word is *paus-* (to leave, desert, cease, stop). In each definition, there is a break, a moment of ceasing.

Pause is a naming word, or a noun, and an action word, or a verb. As a naming word, it describes "a temporary cessation," "a hesitation or a reason for hesitation" "a delay or suspended reaction," or "a break, stop, or rest often for a calculated purpose or effect" (American Heritage, p. 1022). As an action word, it "cease[s] or suspend[s] an action temporary" and it "linger[s]" or "tarr[ies]" (American Heritage, p. 1022). It is the time when we, as individuals, must be leaders in our own lives as we navigate through multiple life courses and engage in multiple roles as family members, professionals, and contributors to society. It is the time when creative journal writers as composers "put together, arrange, [and] write a work" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2015, compose), or

pausar, "to cease [and] lay down" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2015, compose)—to cease from thinking internally and lay down, or write, their thoughts externally in the sand garden, their journal. It is the time when we recognize and partake in the practical nuances of pausing in our lives. It is now in my journey that I wonder: What might a person encounter as she experiences pauses in her life?

Experiencing the Pause(s)

> Intermissions, delays, silences, and hesitations of life are important in fashioning a sense of identity and personal worth as well as contributing to a sense of sociality and community. (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 4)

A moment of pause is a space in time that demands or urges the specificity of now. It is the marker of living in the present moment, moments used to require nothing from us except attentiveness—an operational awareness that life is continuous and fiercely entangled in time and action. It is a compass used to guide us from one garden to the next. It is a bookmarker placed in the story of our lives for brief interludes, the intermissions, delays, silences, and hesitations that Snow and Brissett (1986) highlight as essential to our sense of self personally and as beings in the world with others. Collectively, the interludes, or pauses, can be labeled as five types—benchmarks, taking stock, rejuvenation, waiting, and withdrawal. However, there is a blurring factor or a grey area when considering the pause. The pause itself can and often has more than one meaning. Furthermore, as Snow and Brissett assert, "All types of pauses have properties in common that make this phenomenon distinct and separate from what is commonly defined as on-going action" (p. 5). Specifically, pauses individually defined are "not a classification based on formal criteria or rules of identification and discovery" (p. 4). Instead, as my study relates to the action of creative journaling, pauses are "periods of

apparent noninteraction rather than periods of nonaction" (p. 4). In other words, the woman who experiences a creative journal pause is actively engaged in an experience that provides a reprieve from something and/or someone else. In this reprieve, she is cradling time—remembering, forgetting, asking, and knowing—while embracing the incentives of the words and images that flow from her mind to the page.

Naturally, as Snow and Brissett (1986) suggest, there are two things to highlight: (a) "a pause may or may not be preplanned" (p. 4); and, (b) "more than one meaning can and often is established for a single pause" (p. 5). Similarly, in some instances, a creative journaling pause urges the unexpected or unplanned; and, in other instances, it starts expectedly, or as planned. Yet, regardless of the spontaneity in pauses—or not, there is a decision to be made: Do I give or release myself to the experience of the pause? If yes, what determines this act of acceptance to let go? If no, what determines this act of refusal to let go? The next five sections seek to accomplish two things: a) unfold the five labels of pause from the perspective of women writers who have etched their experiences of pausing in speeches and/or who have etched their thoughts and/or experiences of pausing creatively—or otherwise—in short stories from their lives, songs, poems, and/or film; and, b) continue to explore the questions I have surrounding the mesh of writing, drawing, and pausing, a creative journal pause. Is not a pause a moment of letting go, of surrendering, of yielding to a space in a place of our own? Is not creative journaling a pause, a moment, a specific non-interaction, when we record and acknowledge who are? What is this experience? What does it look like?

Pauses as benchmarks.

> Pausing is the doorway to awakening. [The] haiku epitomizes a moment that occurs naturally in our lives, but that we often hurry or gloss over. Haiku awareness is a simple way to slow down and tune into this fleeting moment, to appreciate what is right in front of us. We pause not only with our body but also with our mind. And sometimes we can be attentive and sometimes we cannot, but that is all right, for the next moment always brings us the fresh possibility to pause and be present again. …And we let out a breath or sigh. Pausing. (Lamb, 2008, p. 1)

I relish the idea of pausing as a haiku (Donegan, 2008; Gurga, 2003; Lamb, 2008; Sanchez 2007). A poetic benchmark includes viewpoint, remembrance, or commemorative standard in which to reveal, uncover, disclose, unearth pieces of who we are in particular moments of our lives. It, the pause-haiku, makes concise statements of our distant past, immediate present, and forever near future; and, yet, we must take note that even in thoughts of our now, we are, at times, reflecting on the nearest moments of our past while living-in-our-now.

At times, "a pause's most utilitarian function is a separation of other actions into meaningful and sometimes mutually exclusive categories" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 5). These pauses serve as juxtaposing reference points for past and future experiences. It is a way of "pausing to engage in non-required interaction with certain individuals" (p. 5) and/or things. It is the place in a moment that "serves as a deep reminder for us to pause and to be present to the details of the everyday" (Donegan, 2008, p. xi). It is the haiku, which is "created from two ingredients: an experience and an expression of that experience in words after it has passed through the poet's heart" (Gurga, 2003, p. 13). The haiku provides a pause as a benchmark in our lives. The benchmarks become markers of expression, notices, and types of awareness that we are still here, present, living our lives in the now. It is never too long, but short, expressive, meaningful,

significant, consequential, and sometimes serendipitous (or unexpected opportunities to make note of our lives).

lived experience
sets me within a rainbow—
the pausing benchmark.
(S. Riley, 2015)

From a historical perspective, "haiku was first introduced to an English-speaking audience through translations of Japanese *hokku* in the late nineteenth century" (Gurga, 2003, p. 9); poet and critic Shiki Masaoka coined the term haiku (Gurga, 2003; Johnson, 2012). Structurally, "the *hokku* was of prescribed length (seventeen Japanese sounds…)" (p. 4); and, "in Western languages, haiku is commonly arranged into three lines, a rendition of the Japanese syllabic pattern of five, seven, and five moras [or rhythm, short syllables]" (Johnson, 2012, p. 595).

> When trying to establish an appropriate form, differences between Japanese and English languages need be taken into consideration. Perhaps the most significant is that what we have been calling "Japanese syllables" are not syllables at all in our sense of the word. Japanese syllables are uniformly short, differing considerably in length from syllables in English, so it might be better simply to think of them as "sounds" rather than "syllables." (Gurga, 2003, p. 15)

Typically, haiku is described as a poem developed through one form—three lines, 17 syllables (Gurga, 2003). The first and third lines have 5 syllables; the second line has 7 syllables. However, now, "modern haiku occurs in many forms" (Gurga, 2003, p. vii), not in necessarily 17 syllables, but not more either. Most importantly, as Gurga (2003) indicates, there are five principal elements for writing haiku: (a) a chosen form representing "brevity and minimalism" (p. 21); (b) the seasonal element, "the soul of haiku" (p. 24); (c) "a particular event in the present tense, often referred to as 'a haiku moment'" (p. 14) or "aha moment" (p. 33); (d) the "cut" or *caesura*—at least two images

that “serve as a pause … that divides it into two parts” (p. 44); and (e) juxtaposition and internal comparison, “a space …created between the images in which the reader’s emotions or understanding can lodge and grow” (p. 39). These principles help us to form a poem that adheres to the central act of haiku, “letting an object or event touch us, and then sharing it with another” (Harter & Higginson, 2009, p. 6).

Donegan (2008) suggests the idea of a “haiku mind”—“a simple yet profound way of seeing our everyday world and living our lives with the awareness of the moment expressed in haiku—and to therefore hopefully inspire others to live with more clarity, compassion, and peace” (p. xi). For her, within the moments of heighted awareness in simple imagery, a haiku presents three types of experiences in particular: (a) “a reflection of our day-to-day life” (p. xi); (b) a deep reminder for us to pause and to be present to the details of the everyday; and, (c) “a way to be in the world with awakened open-hearted awareness—of being mindful of the ordinary moments of our lives” (p. xi).

Within its three lines, the haiku is a celebration of life, its brevity, and the fact that it exists. For seventeen syllables or less (and not much more), the writer is freed and the reader is embraced, both acknowledging what is.

> i knew when i heard young poets say in verse and conversation: i’m gonna put you on “pause,” i heard their “haiku nature,” their haikuography. They were saying, i gotta make you slow down and check out what’s happening in your life. In the world. So this haiku slows us down, makes us stay alive and breathe with that one breath that it takes to recite a haiku. This haiku, this tough form disguised in beauty and insight, is like the blues, for they both offer no solutions, only a pronouncement, a formal declaration—an acceptance of pain, humor, beauty, and non-beauty, death and rebirth, surprise and life. Always life. Both always help us to maintain memory and dignity. (Sanchez, 2010, p. xiv)

The act of pausing as haiku provides us with benchmarks, short concise moments that help to divide the seasons, periods, phases, segments of our lives into digestible memories—both good and indifferent.

Thoele (2008) suggests that "Haiku offers a process of simplifying and distilling that invites new awareness and deeper understanding into our hearts and minds" (p. 60). For instance, I wrote the following haiku, "Woman-self Forgive," when I realized I was holding myself hostage in unforgiveness. I was disappointed with myself for the weight gained over the years; I was unappreciative of the "fat self" protecting the "thin self"; I was ungrateful of the body that carried me from one point of my life to the next regardless of its shape or size; and, I was unpleasantly disrespectful to the small gains I had achieved as I recovered from hormonal imbalance and perimenopausal symptoms.

Forgiveness I must
Give to myself, woman, me—
purple lilies love.
(S. Riley, 2014)

This haiku pause, or benchmark in my life, is the separation between unforgiveness and forgiveness. As I allow my body time to heal, regroup, and embrace the changes that come with being an older woman moving, I am able to move from one sand garden of womanhood to the next with meaning and expectation; my past and my future are distinctively marked and fervently treasured as I write haiku.

Mid-Forties

Mid-forties I am.
Leaves falling, colors changing—
beauty made anew.
(S. Riley, 2015)

***

Female Pauses

Perimenopause—
the distinct moments before
menopause blossoms.
(S. Riley, 2015)

***

The Older Graduate Student

Like younger students,
I reach above for the stars
at forty-something.
(S. Riley, 2015)

As haiku writers, through the experience of "recognizing the intimate things that touch us, we come to know and appreciate ourselves and our world more" (Harter & Higginson, 2009, p. 6). With our haiku minds, as we share with others, we involve them in our lives in an intimate and personal way (Donegan, 2008; Harter & Higginson, 2009; Sanchez, 2010; Snow & Brissett, 1986). Furthermore, as others take part in our lives, our stories, our benchmark pauses, they too may find reason to pause and engage in the moments of their own lives. Benchmarks allow us to distinguish and clarify situations from the past—previous actions, relationships, and physical place (Snow & Brissett, 1986). Thus, remembering that pauses, though unique to ourselves, are also fluid, connected, and often continuous. A benchmark becomes a moment to take stock, becomes a moment to rejuvenate, becomes a moment to wait, becomes a moment to withdrawal temporarily.

Pause as taking stock.

> Before you go out and press that fast fo[r]ward button, I'm hoping—I'm praying—that you'll have the courage to first press the pause button. That's right: the pause button. I hope if you learn anything from me today, you learn and remember—**The power of the Pause.** Pausing allows you to take a breath—to

> take a breath in your life. As everyone else is rushing around like a lunatic out there, I dare you to do the opposite … it's really important to pause along the way and take a break from communicating outwardly, so you can communicate inwardly, with yourself. (Shiver, 2012, para. 22-35)

During her University of Southern California's Annenberg School Commencement Speech, Shiver (2012) reminds the graduates that "A communications degree means nothing today unless you know how to go beyond the easy into the unknown—unless you know to pause, how to listen" (para. 33) in the "Open Field of life" (para. 63). When we look within the horizon of our life experiences, or possibilities, and question what could, should, or would have been, we are seeking to receive "that implicit sense of broad perspectives, of the range of human life and culture, and of our own limits that constitutes a non-dogmatic wisdom" (Gadamer, 1975/2013, p. xii). We are allowing ourselves to pause, review past events and experiences, and take stock not just to gain information to add to our supply of knowledge (Gadamer, 1975/2013; Snow & Brissett, 1986), but also to make a decision about how we will move forward—either "decid[ing] to continue on course with the same or better performance, or to terminate" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 6). Either way, Snow and Brissett assert, "A pause to momentarily discontinue and take stock provides the opportunity to construct a sense of personal continuity" (p. 6), which "often leads to a strengthening of purpose and dedication" (p. 6). Such moments of pausing remind me of the writer Janet Frame who took stock of her life and realized the importance of living for herself.

Frame (2014) was misdiagnosed with schizophrenia as a young woman and spent several years in psychiatric hospitals. As a part of her recovery and as a means to get a clearer view of her future, Frame was asked to write her story about the extended time she spent in a hospital in New Zealand. With this writing, she was able to pause and take

stock of her life, noticing that her desire to belong increased her willingness to allow others to decide her life, which heightened her anxieties and compromised her thoughts of self.

> With time, the marvelous luxury of time, and patience, Dr. Cawley convinced me that I was myself, I was an adult, I need not explain myself to others. … In his response to this lifelong urging of others to me that I should 'get out and mix,' Dr. Cawley was clear: his prescription for my ideal life was that I should live alone and write while resisting, if I wished this, the demands of others to 'join in.' (p. 459)

Through the assistance of Dr. Cawley and other supports, like family and friends, Frame decided to terminate the course of the past and move forward with the strength to accept and act on what she needed in order to exist in the world. Interestingly, as her writing progressed and was published, not even the negative reviews and critics could persuade her back to the days prior to her taking stock.

> [A] writer must stand on the rock of her self and her judgment or be swept way by the tide or sink in the quaking earth: there must be an inviolate place where the choices and decisions, however imperfect, are the writer's own, where the decision must be as individual and solitary as birth or death. What was the use of my having survived as a person if I could not maintain my own judgment? Only then could I have the confidence to try to shape a novel or story or poem the way I desired and needed it to be, with both the imperfections and felicities bearing my own signature. (p. 469)

Interestingly, this strengthening is accomplished as individuals make "a concerted act of eliminating extraneous information from future consideration … for particular kinds of future behaviors" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 6). As Shiver (2012) admonishes the Communication graduates, creative journal writers must also press the pause button, taking stock of our lives. We must "live and write [our] own stor[ies] and then be brave enough to communicate it authentically" (para. 65), knowing "someone else will be inspired by it and learn from it" (para. 65).

> Be committed to communicating the truth. Don't get so caught up along the way in what you're doing and where you're going that you lose sight of your core values: who you are and what's important in your life. … PAUSE—take a moment. Look at your options—check your intentions—and THEN? Take the high road. (para. 66-67)

This journey is about moving forward—creative journaling beyond doubt, beyond fear, and beyond a quieted voice. It is constantly living in a place of hope with strength as words are written and images are drawn or attached to the journal page. It is allowing ourselves the room to inquire and question; and, yet I wonder: What are the benefits and limitations of participating in creative journaling pauses? How does one form of pausing encourage and/or nurture another form of pausing during a particular creative journaling moment?

Pause as rejuvenation.

> I told him I would like something to write on, and he asked if I wanted a journal. I said yes, and he came home with a blue diary with flowers on its cover. … I know he might read this, so I have to be careful about what I say. But I'm going to write to my family. Maybe that will feel like talking to them on the phone or sending them a letter. I miss them so much. I want to let them know I'm alive. (Berry & Dejeus, 2015, p. 16)

Each entry of Amanda Berry's diary (as cited in Berry & Dejesus, 2015) gives a glimpse of her distress and longing to be free. Berry is one of three women once held captive in a Cleveland house. In 2013, she and the other two women—Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight—escaped. Enduring physical and sexual abuse for a little over a decade, the women survived. Throughout their captivity, they survived by taking various moments to pause, in particular writing and drawing about their experiences—the bad and the good. Each pause accentuates a "way of stepping back and away from a course of action to recoup, refresh, or even relax, the linearity of one's existence is jolted and feelings of relief and freedom are experienced" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 7). Each

pause, for the women, is a "time out for rejuvenation and revitalization" (p. 7). Each pause surrenders within a space for them to breathe and hope and live rejuvenated—renewed, recharged, refreshed, and restored.

> We have written here about terrible things that we never wanted to think about again. But our story is not just about rape and chains, lies and misery. … Our story is about overcoming all that. We want people to know the truth, the real story of our decade as … prisoners inside 2207 Seymour Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. For years we could see on TV that our families were looking for and praying for us. They never gave up, and that gave us strength. We videotaped news coverage of them holding vigils and replayed those tapes on our most desperate days. When it was very hard to believe we would ever be free again, and no longer enslaved by a cruel man, just writing the word "hope" over and over helped keep us going. Now we want the world to know: We survived, we are free, we love life. We were stronger … (Berry & Dejesus, 2015, A Note to Readers, para.1-4)

In many ways, this "periodic relief from a course of action must be achieved in order to continue the action and maintain a standard of performance" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 7). This periodic relief though writing, or moments of journaling, implies a sense of freedom. Each woman "becomes rejuvenated through the realization that we can step aside from the inevitable, relentless, and obdurate quality of everyday life" (Snow & Brissett, p. 7). As discussed in each respective memoir, each woman was somewhat physically and emotionally able to continue moving forward after each experience of physical reprieve to refresh personally (Berry & Dejesus, 2015; Knight, 2014; Snow & Brissett, 1986).

While in captivity, the pauses seem to help each woman acknowledge that their lives were not in vain. From their stories, we see the lived experiences of what Snow and Brissett (1986) assert: "To the extent that pausing establishe[s] a sense of rhythm, we feel emotionally refreshed and existentially vigorous" (p. 7). By pausing to write, each woman seems to rejuvenate, or revive herself emotionally and continue to live despite the

horrible circumstances of the house. Each woman finds a way to pause. Each woman finds a way to keep writing. Each woman has her own story to tell. For instance, when the captor gives her wrapped food items, Amanda eats the food and writes on the wrapping paper.

> … he finally gives me a Mr. Hero sandwich, I keep the napkin. It's very thin but has lots of white space where I can write. I'm keeping McDonald's and Wendy's bags too, because I can tear them open and write on the inside. The only paper I have is my diary, but that's filling up. So I keep every scrap of paper I can find in case I run out. Writing things down makes me feel closer to my family. (Berry & Dejesus, 2015, p. 38)

When the captor returns to the house with a flyer he obtained, Gina asks to keep it and writes her hopes for tomorrow.

> I'm so mad that he was out there talking to my mom. That's like laughing in her face. I want to strangle him, but I just keep rubbing his shoulders. "Where is it?" I ask. "Can I have it?" "Sure, I don't care," he says. "It's in my jeans pocket in the kitchen." I find his pants folded over the back of a chair. I reach into the pocket and find a piece of folded-up paper. I open it and I see in big letters, MISSING PERSON: GEORGINA "GINA" DEJESUS, and six little pictures of me at different ages. I start crying. An hour ago, this paper was in my mom's hands. I finish massaging him and then go upstairs. I'm going to decorate my flyer, and I hope someday I can show it to my mom. I cut out little paper hearts, cover them with red glitter, and glue them to the flyer. I carefully cut out one of the little photos of me. I'm going to put it in a pretty picture frame I made. (Berry & Dejesus, 2015, p. 216)

When the captor provides her with writing supplies, Michelle accepts the tools as something good.

> … the dude came into my room and handed me a red spiral notebook, a pencil, and a small sharpener. "Here, maybe you can draw or something," he said. The pencil was dull, but it had an eraser on the bottom. Some of the pages of the notebook were torn out. I didn't thank him. I just took the pencil, notebook, and sharpener out of his hand. On the inside I was yelling, "Oh my god! I can't believe it! Now I can draw! Yes!" This was the first day in that house, other than the days I got Lobo and the TV, when something good happened. (Knight, 2014, p. 139)

This something good allows her to create with her own body. The words and images within her are no longer held captive. Her hands embody her thoughts, feelings, and ideas and commit them to paper.

> I really missed drawing wolves, so right away I drew one. I made it so big that it filled the whole page and went over the edges a little. It wasn't my best one, but I was still happy. From then on, the first thing I did when I woke up was pick up that pencil, sharpen it, and start writing or drawing. I couldn't get enough; I wrote every day. Poems. Songs. What made me sad. Letters to Joey. And dreams of how I wished everything could be different. I was careful not to say anything too specific about the dude, because I figured he might read it. This is one of the first things I wrote: *Every time I see a butterfly, it reminds me of how precious life can truly be. To be able to turn from a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly and fly away so freely and gracefully wherever she may please, without no one in the world to tell her what to do. I wait for that special moment in time when I get to live life freely, without no worries, pain, or tears. I just want to be happy. I want to hear the laughter in the air without all of the pain. One special day I'll get to live my life just like that beautiful butterfly. I will no longer feel blue inside.* (Knight, 2014, pp. 140-141)

Each of their stories gives place to the sacredness of writing and drawing—the redemptive and liberating action of living in the world with our internal text and images made external.

Even within their place of capacity, there is a pause of freedom and for freedom. The house becomes the space; the napkin, restaurant bags, diary, flyer and spiral notebook become the sand gardens—the places of pause; and, the words and drawings—their expression of self—become the sand castles. Their experiences of writing and drawing, or sporadic moments of creative journaling pauses, reveal at least two things: (a) how each woman is not only rejuvenated and revitalized in a sense of refreshment, but also (b) how this type of pause is an "essential [component] to what is existentially basic to self and to continued action" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 7).

> …God is telling me not to give up hope that someday I will be free. I write an entry in my diary, addressed to my mom and Beth, telling them about all this, and

> a saying, "Keep faith!" I flip over to the last page of my diary notebook, where I start a wish list. Beneath it I write the two things I want more than anything: *1. To have my mommy back. 2. To be home with my family.* (Berry & Dejeus, 2015, p. 244)

Each woman—through her own way of writing and drawing to express herself—communicates her being within the world with the hopes of someday surviving the ordeal of captivity. The amazing part is that five days after Amanda writes her list of two things, an opportunity opens for the women to escape the house. Today, they are not only survivors, but also published writers who share their life stories, "We are now living our lives the way we should!" (Berry & Dejesus, 2015, p. 318).

Pause as waiting.

> It is the pause that gives us this clarity, this certainty. It is our time of gathering the vision together, of reminding ourselves of what we want for ourselves and how we want the same for everyone. …The pause, so brief—if only in retrospect—gives us a wonderful intuitive knowing about abundance. After all, we ourselves were empty, and now we begin to fill up again. So it is with everything. (Walker, 2006, p. 69)

In her 2002 California Institute of Integral Studies Commencement Address, Walker (2006) asserts that "The time of 'the pause" is the "universal place of stopping" and "the universal moment of reflection" (p. 49); yet, it can feel like being "jettisoned into wide open, empty space" (p. 49), an area where writers find themselves "riddled with pauses" (p. 69). It is a place of waiting in anticipation, expectation, and hope.

In her poem "The Writer's Life," Walker (2006), speaks of her lived experience with pause—the moments of waiting for the arrival of "Story," a body of written work. The first stanza allows the reader to recognize a pause in the moment of "gazing out the window" (p. 70), the moment where stopping and reflecting collide.

During those times
I possess the imagination to ignore
The chaos
I live
The writer's life:
I lie in bed
Gazing out
The window.

However, the last stanza allows the reader to experience the harvest of a pause as the anticipated "story" is expected to "announce itself."

If there is a
Story
It will
Cough
In the Middle
Of our
Lazy
Day
Only once
Maybe more
& Announce itself.

Likewise, in her poem "Stations," Lorde (1986) speaks of the lived experience of women waiting for various aspects of their lives to come into fruition. The first stanza (p. 14) allows the reader to recognize the urgency of waiting in anticipation of a future event. Yet, the word "some" is used, indicating not all women wait for or in the same manner as others.

Some women love
to wait
for life for a ring
in the June light for a touch
of the sun to heal them for another
woman's voice to make them whole
to untie their hands
put words in their mouths
form to their passages sounds
to their screams for some other sleeper
to remember their future their past.

However, the last stanza (p. 15) allows the reader to experience the harvest of a pause as the prompting of their life changes if not by external factors, most definitely by self.

> Some women wait for something
> to change and nothing
> does change
> so they change
> themselves.

In both poems, the pauses—or deliberate periods of waiting—are the life moments that generate poetic experiences in our lives. These moments bring something into our existence. This "waiting differs slightly from the pause to mark and distinguish [or benchmark] in that it essentially involves anticipation for the future rather than distinction to past events" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 8). It "includes anticipated and unanticipated interruptions either which may be defined as an appropriate or inappropriate break in a course of action" (p. 8). In its due time, a "future-oriented action" (p. 8) will appear in the present.

Pause as withdrawal. The pauses are the moments of temporary withdrawals. The withdrawals are retreats, or moments of departure, that provide miniature sanctuaries, or shelters. The sanctuaries are openings, or areas, that offer us a spectrum of opportunities to connect with the functions, purposes, gatherings, and activities that include the letters **spect**—introspect, circumspect, inspect, suspect and re-inspect, a bringing forth of something to see again, which allows us to prioritize and respect our selves for who we are. After the connection, we are able to develop a "conspectus," or an overall summary, to esteem and prioritize ourselves, writing our lives poetically—after allowing ourselves to move from performing a transaction to giving an expression to

creating a poetic rendering of who we are to ourselves. With “time,” “maturity,” and “patience,” “one learns to dance” (Walker, 2006, p. 69) with the pauses in her life.

For instance, my friend Rose, who participated in a haiku journaling study, mentioned that for her the Haiku structure of 5/7/5, or 17 syllables count, means 17 minutes of quiet “me time” to think, write and/or just be in the moment with solitude. As Rose explains:

> I guess if sharing it [Haiku journaling] with someone—another woman—basically, I would tell her that it’s your 10 to 15 minutes everyday that belongs just to you. I would explain to her the 5/7/5, and what that meant. And to me, that could be—5/7/5. That could be 17 minutes that belongs to yourself. 17 minutes out of 24 hours is nothing, but that could be her 17 minutes of solitude; her 17 minutes of reflection; her 17 minutes thinking about what she wants for that day or for her life everyday.

For Rose, the structure of the haiku poem was a symbol of time set aside for creating a moment, or occasion, in her life to think, write, or just be present for at least 17 minutes out of each day.

Despite the type, journal writing is the method, or process, used to reflect and/or question (life experiences and events) and self-assess personal feelings while learning strategies to become an active listener who is comfortable (satisfied, relaxed, content) with her authentic self (as human). As Lukinsky (1990) explains, “Keeping a journal may help adults break habitual modes of thinking and change life direction through reflective withdrawal and reentry” (p. 213). For a woman, this moment of “withdrawal” (Lukinsky, p. 213), “pause” (Dowrick, 2009), or “time-out” (Reiter, 2009, p. 6) is pivotal to her ability to create “as [she} enters into a new state of consciousness” (Reiter, 2009, p. 7), or awareness of herself as woman, journal writer, and/or being—sometimes asking and/or answering the question Who am I?

Creative Journaling: Women Writers Digging in the Garden

> Gardens yield prodigal pleasures. Their bounty includes not only fruits and flowers, vegetables and herbs, but also beauty, respite, and reflection. Gardens delight the senses, prompt thought, evoke feeling and emotion, and engage the imagination. (Ross, 1988, p. xi)

As creative journal writers, the sand garden is not just about seeing and waiting for us to spring forth out of our internal self into the external world as women. It is also about the dig, the excavation, the careful scraping of life pits, or life experiences, to unfold and reveal our lives as individuals living with others. Our digging utensils are the writing and drawing tools we use to express ourselves—pencils, crayons, pens, paint brushes, fingers, and sticks in the sand. Each tool releases and liberates us in our personal garden, allowing us to yield the uncontrolled pleasures of which Ross (1988) speaks—beauty, respite, and reflection. Each tool is an accomplice to the moment of expressing who we are, who we were, and who we will be as a girl, a woman, a female: the feminine embodied whole.

In unearthing the whole self, creative journal writers take the time to gather information from various facets of life experiences to express, connect, and create their life journeys. Their muses, or inspirational bursts of beauty, are movies, old letters, songs, poems, books, surreal moments in nature and wise words from grandmothers, mothers, aunties, and sisters. Their supports, or personal respite breathers, are other women (and sometimes men) who take the time to pause with them, not to offer advice, but to listen—fueling their energies just to be seen, heard, and treasured for being. Their considerations, or concentrated moments of reflection, are prayers, petitions, or devotions that center the digging that exhorts, or urges, the question of *Who am I?* Their creative journaling pauses become the whimsical moments in their lives when they allow

themselves to write and draw from within out into the open—internal to external etched in profound fearless faith.

It is here, in this type of digging, that I begin to wonder: Is this the type of inquisitive excavation—Who is the I AM of Who am I?—that causes them, women creative journal writers, to appreciate themselves more, as females, during the poetic process of journaling? Is this the moment when we, as women, accept our bodies and give them permission to change as daughters, now grown, as we understand our mothers and their struggles with self? As Christians, do we step into a realm of faith, accepting our imperfections while embracing God's love and trusting His will? Is this the moment when we, as creative journal writers, pause and allow ourselves to take risks, remove the masks we have so comfortably worn, and unearth the female that lies dormant, or undeveloped, within us? The following poem explores the unleashing of risk as we remove the masks (those things we hide behind) while boldly asking ourselves the Who am I? question and making the resolve to wait for an unearthing of the response to be revealed.

Removing the Mask

Risk
What is it?
An understanding a thought a reason
a belief to know
we are you are I am
removing the masks
we created
through our pain, hurt, and neglect of yesterdays
gone wrong today.

Escaping beyond the measures of who we are not
requires risk,
embracing who we are like wild ants running through fire
centering ourselves in the ashes—

ashes to ashes, dust to dust—
we breathe,
choosing to live,
climbing from the ant hole
determined to work at the intricacies of who we are
finding our inner joy beauty purpose reining in love.

The beautiful colors of the rainbow—
God's promise that life exists beyond the water
used to cleanse away the muddy remnant of what ifs
had I only
said goodbye yesterday
to make room for my hellos today.

Risk—
What is it?
It's choosing yourself.
It's believing in you.
It's trusting God makes no mistakes.
It's taking off the mask.
It's knowing you are worth asking the question:

Who I am? *Who I am?* Who am I?
and
waiting for a response—an unearthed truth.
(S. Riley, 2015)

A pause is the moment life interjects for the purposes of gathering our attention inwardly, setting our parameters outwardly. It is the un-synced time right before experience releases a space to endure another episode of who we are. It is the story before the story. It is the place of decision, of faith, of love, of authenticity in which we see and acknowledge the fork in the road. It is the smiles of good-bye and the tears of hello. It is the moment we see the clearest; and, yet at times, choose not to see at all. It is the moment we either dig deep within ourselves to unearth the female or keep her buried, silenced, unidentified.

Digging in the Garden: Removing the Masks

> … I am my own victim, my own perpetrator. Of course, the tools of my self-victimization have been made readily available. The pattern of the perfect body has been programmed into me since birth. But whatever the cultural influences and pressures, my preoccupation with my flab, my constant dieting, exercising, worrying, is self-imposed. (Ensler, 2005, p. xii)

The body is the vessel from which we live our earthly lives. Yet, unfortunately, from time to time, some of us, as women, find this vessel—the female body—cumbersome, complicated, and constricted, or confined (De Beauvoir, 1952/1989; Ensler, 2005; Estes, 1995). We entangle ourselves in the thorns and thistles of the world's projections of who we *should be* as females instead of embracing *who were are*—or *who we are not*. Of course, there are incidences in our lives, when other individuals project their interpretation of who we are as women on us. However, for this research, the emphasis is on the masks we create for ourselves when we accept the extreme tools, or apparatuses that society uses to define womanhood, instead of accepting and using only the tools that align with who we are as individual females. The societal apparatuses include, but are not limited to, media campaigns on being a particular type of beauty, familial expectations of being all things to all members, feminist ideals of having a particular type of woman-centeredness, or man-made religious principles that are not biblical.

Digging in the Garden: Unearthing the Female

Fortunately, from the writings of female and male writers, there are contrasts to the societal standards of womanhood. Through the unearthing of these contrasts, women are encouraged to embrace their femaleness without apology, but with compassion, self-

confidence, and risk. The following writers and scholars have contributed to the conversation opening an awareness of truth concerning the female.

Ensler (2001) unearths the "V-word" with the *Vagina Monologues*. She champions a movement in which the vagina, a female body part, becomes acceptable to the spoken tongue. From all walks of life, women come to share their vagina stories one-to-one with Ensler and/or in community with each other. These unearthing sessions give women a chance to dig within their personal pit of life experiences and reflect upon their personal vagina stories from childhood exploration to menstruation to menopause (though no stories of menopause were mentioned in the monologue). This unearthing allows women to remove their masks concerning sexual pleasure and displeasure; and, most notably, it allows women a chance to fully express themselves without reservation concerning every aspect of their physical female bodies. The discussion is no longer centered on the feminine face, breast, butt, legs, and thighs, but on the integral part of woman's personhood that is often neglected, abused, and degraded by society at-large. Discussions about vaginas also mean discussions about sex trade, prostitution, pornography, and unschooled girls. By unearthing the v-word, Ensler assists women in reclaiming their vaginas and their female selves as a whole. As Ensler asserts, "*In order for the human race to continue, women must be safe and empowered*. It's an obvious idea, but like a vagina, it needs great attention and love in order to be revealed" ("Introduction," last para).

Gilbert (2006) unearths a tri-fold of essentials—praying, eating, and loving—from a female perspective: her own. Through telling her own personal story, Gilbert ignites a collective empathetic ear across secular and religious women communities that

God, food, and love are still three of the most complex topics for women to reconcile in their daily lives (Olivier, 2012; Williams, 2014). This unearthed story allows women to dig within themselves and remove the masks of their own spiritual lives, eating practices, and companionship vices. God, food, and love are no longer oppressive, overbearing, or oblique, but instead loving, appealing, and direct. Despite the occasional awkward feeling of vulnerability, serendipitous happenings are accepted and expected, as long as the situation is good and healthy (Anjarwalla, 2010). By unearthing her understanding of God, food, and love through the creative device of story, Gilbert presents women with the power of creativity, or vision, in the face of fear. Insecurities, weaknesses, and helplessness are met with grit, fortitude, and perseverance. Even during an interview when asked the question—What role does vulnerability play in your work, Gilbert (2013) responds with the expectation of moving her life forward regardless:

> …So here's my magical thinking—I decide every day that I love Creativity enough to accept that Fear will always come with it. And I talk to Fear all the time, speaking to it with love and respect, saying to it: "I know that you are Fear, and that your job is to be afraid. And you do your job really well! I will never ask you to leave me alone or to be silent, because you have a right to speak your own voice, and I know that you will never leave me alone or be silent, anyhow. But I need you to understand that I will always choose Creativity over you. You may join us on this journey—and I know that you will—but you will not stop me and Creativity from choosing the direction in which we will all walk together." And then...onward we march: Me and Creativity and Fear, enmeshed forever, limping along and definitely a little weird-looking, but forever advancing. (Anjarwalla, 2010)

Gilbert's response is a pebble on my path to unearth self. It leads me to wonder: Is it here, in our creative moments, we feel more strength and stability to name and accept ourselves? Is it here, in our desire to be resourceful, where we refuse to be the pariah of our own existence as female? For in our creative selves, are we not imaginative, playful, riddled with anxiety, yet defining an existence for us to be called?

Walker (1967/1983) unearths the word "womanist." A womanist is "a black feminist or feminist of color" (xi) who "appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility, and women's strength" (p. xi). This woman is aware of the injustices against all women and is an activist, a voice, a hand, and agent for change. The core of her being is love. As Walker asserts, a womanist "loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*" (p. xii). She is not a contrast to White feminists who take a stand for all women. From an analogical perspective, a "womanist is to feminist as purple [is] to lavender" (p. xii). She is "committed to [the] survival and wholeness of [an] entire people, male *and* female" (p. xi).

> Women have to understand that regardless of who does not want us, we have to want ourselves. Then we can begin to see and appreciate other women and the amazing possibilities of self-love and acceptance we can find in our union with each other. (Walker, 1967/1983, p. 196)

For the past twenty-seven years, since I discovered the word "womanist," Walker's (2010) responses to female oppression of any kind have been consistent: bring awareness, call for community activism, and promote self-love.

DePaulo (2006) and McKinney-Hammond (2003) unearth a newfound respect for being single as an individual and as a female. From two different perspectives, secular and spiritual, both writers embraced singleness, and released the stigmas, or shameful judgments, that are often attached to those individuals labeled, branded, and categorized as single—the divorcee, the widow(er), or the unmarried. From a feminine point of view the single woman is the person who is not defined by, attached to, and involved in a "serious coupled relationship" (DePaulo, 2006, p. 2). Nevertheless, like the coupled woman, she, too, is capable of living a purposeful and fulfilled life as a single woman.

Her singleness does not necessarily mean she is alone or lonely. She is a multi-dimensional being—a professional, a mom, a friend, a sister, a creative being. She is a complete human—a whole person with or without someone in her life (DePaulo, 2006; McKinney-Hammond, 2003). For a woman who just happens to be single, the choice to live happily ever after is hers to make. If she desires, she can follow her dreams; she can envision herself anew; she can create and participate in a lifetime of opportunities; she can live life to the fullest as a single person (DePaulo, 2006; McKinney-Hammond, 2003).

Williams (2012) unearths the edges, or boundaries, of a mother-daughter relationship. Though this threshold positioning is not easy or necessarily welcomed, a daughter can see the blurred and unexplained volumes of her mother's life in the distance, but within her reach. For Williams, her mother-daughter edged experience is opening the personal journals her mother bequeathed to her upon death, only to find each one blank as she sits to read them. "My mother left me her journals, and all her journals were blank. …My Mother's journals are written with invisible ink" (p. 39). This complicated, but dynamic connection between two women—a mother and her daughter—is explored through the heaviness of words unwritten and the sharpness of words unspoken. The words are the elephants-in-the-room—invisible yet forever present between them, a mother and her girl child. Each unspoken and unwritten word is the thing in our lives that has an understood, yet unexpressed presence; the thing in which those close to us either know about or sense, but fail to report or address. It is the fluidity, the changeability, the gracefulness of the feminine unfolding before our eyes as we begin to see our mothers as women nurturing the female within herself. It is the "inner-us"

reminding the "outer-us" of our lifelong girlhood dreams often lost to our roles as women now grown. It is here in my inner/outer moments, I feel myself rising up and taking deep breaths as I wonder deep within: Is now the time to address it, the issue, the elephant-in-the-room? *or* Do I keep dancing around it, knowing it will move just enough for me to maybe stumble, but not fall; for me to want to stay safe, but yearn for risk; for me to cry inwardly, but smile outwardly; for me to wait, but want action?

Within a moment, each question creates its own experience of moving forward. The first creates a springboard of assertiveness to confidently speak my mind and heart. The second creates a pseudo-defense mechanism or false sense of buffering to rebound and shield who I am once again inside myself—knowing the elephant's thickness and roundness will be a distraction, keeping everyone falsely oblivious to the issue. The decision to choose the first or the second experience resides with the need to be inside or outside, internal or external, of where we are as individuals—living and creating our own personal text (internal) or gleaning from the texts of other women, in particular our mothers (external).

> CAN YOU BE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE at the same time? I think this is where I live. I think this is where most women live. I know this is where writers live. Inside to write. Outside to glean. (Williams, 2012, p. 148)

As I think of Williams' work, I found myself drenched in a downpour of two sets of questions about us, the women *who are* or *who are becoming* creative journal writers. The first set of questions stemmed from my wondering about the refusal to write, or to address the elephant-in-the-room. I wonder: By un-writing or refusing to write ourselves at times, are we allowing our wordlessness to create an invisible, yet invincible presence in our lives? Are we refusing to be inside or outside? Is the path of least resistance

chosen to avoid conflict and/or change as we refuse to create the words that tell our stories? Our truths? Or girlhood dreams?

The second set of questions stemmed from my wondering about the alternative—the moment when the path of least resistance is no longer acceptable or tolerated or available to the woman writer; and, the elephant-in-the-room is finally addressed. I wonder: With what feelings will she express herself through writing and/or drawing? In what moment of pause, does a creative journal writer decide to express herself, revealing the unspoken and/or unwritten discernible in her life? Is it in one of the three stages of life: 1) *during* her life experiences—or lack thereof; 2) *at the edge* of her transitioning from life to death; 3) or *in* her death like Williams' mother? Will she make the decision to leave her internal tensions unnamed, blank, without an external presence? Yet, even with the dichotomy, both sets of questions left me with wondering: What life variable or variables cause her to struggle with her need to remove masks, or pretenses, and accept a vulnerable stance to be free?

Munroe (2001) unearths a reminder that men are also concerned with the dilemma women face around the world to embrace and empower herself and others as females. From a secular awareness and a Christian understanding, Munroe speaks of the difficulties women endure on the journey to unearth themselves. He asserts, "Many women are struggling to discover who they are and where they stand today—in the family, community, and the world" (p. 9). Within his secular awareness, Munroe speaks of the difficulties women endure as they attempt to understand who they are as females, but also as they engage with males concerning this journey to unearth themselves as human beings who are specifically women.

> At the same time that women's personal expectations and roles are changing in some nations, many men around the world still have their own opinion about the place for women and want to impose certain standards of behavior on them. Other men are uncertain about the woman's role and function, and therefore they offer little support to women who are struggling with questions of identity. … because of the shift and position and rules, many women are finding themselves in either an uneasy corporation or an uncomfortable conflict with men. (p. 9)

For the most part, cultural traditions and hearts and minds of individual men and women generate the misconceptions—distorted and /or unrealistic views—of women (Collins, 1990; De Beauvoir, 1953/1989; Munroe, 2001). As Munroe suggests, "Women have largely developed their self-concepts from cultural traditions shaped by men who did not understand females" (p. 12). Therefore, from within the Christian perspective, he suggests that the woman was not an afterthought to God, but a specific answer.

> A woman is God's idea. A woman's uniqueness is a reflection of God's purposes and design for her. The woman has a spirit within her, making her a free and responsible spiritual being. (p. 101)

Her design, abilities, and purpose are not man made, but God made. If loved by no one else, including herself, she is loved; God loves her, the woman, regardless. Unfortunately, the world, in general, has used religion to oppress women within its man-made doctrine. However, this stance of oppression is not true within most religions. Specifically, within the Christian tradition, God unearthed the female in the garden as a life-giver, a helpmeet, a dedicated warrior, a spiritual leader, and a compassionate friend like Eve, Deborah, Hannah, Esther, Elizabeth, Anna, and Martha. Throughout the Bible, the woman is an integral part of fulfilling God's plan and purpose in the earth realm, even to the appearance of his son Jesus, whom Mary births and nurtures until his death on the cross. As Munroe (2001) suggests, the woman is a human being with a purpose, made in the image of God; and, therefore we, as women, must "discover and live in the purposes of

our Maker [our God], by undergoing a transformation in the way we think about ourselves as human beings" (p. 46). For Christian women, their examples are often found in the women of the Bible.

Chittiser (2006) unearths what she calls the hidden tradition of the Bible—the friendships of women within Scripture. Using a phrase from the Book of Ecclesiastes, "Two are better than one" (p. xi), she opens the pathway to embrace friendship, "the process of opening ourselves to the care, to the wisdom, of the other" (xiv).

> The love of friendship is the love that holds no secrets, has no unasked questions, no unspoken thoughts, no unanswered concerns. Friendship extends us into the places we have not gone before and cannot go alone. Friendship may be either ultimate or commonplace, but it is never without gain of a little more self. (xiv)

From Chittiser's words, friendship is not designed to be selfish, where one woman takes another hostage expecting a return without investments or companionship without rapport. It is based in *agape* love, the love of another without sensual, or sexual, connotations; and, it is grounded in *phileo* love, a brotherly love—or in this case, a sisterly love. Generally, *agapé* expresses a "moral goodwill which proceeds from esteem, principle, or duty, rather than attraction or charm. … lov[ing] the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection" (Elwell & Beitzel, 1988, p. 1357); and, *phileo* expresses a "spontaneous natural affection, with more feeling than reason" (p. 1357). From both, goodwill and affection, we experience the love of friendship, the warmth of love defined as charity.

> [4] Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, [5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; [6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the [s]truth; [7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [8] Charity never faileth… And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.[13] (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized KJV Version, 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13)

Despite the gender make-up of the friendship—female-to-male or female-to-female—she, the woman friend, serves, gives, nurtures, cultivates, supports, listens, edifies (challenges and encourages), and chastises us to be ourselves all in love. Like the biblical character Lydia, she enables "us to become the best of what we can be, to develop who we are in ourselves, the ones who see our ideas just as valuable, just as possible as their own. …She provides the environment, the model, that leads us to think on our own" (Chittiser, 2006, p. 6). In her friendships, both female-to-male and female-to-female, she gives of herself with compassion, empathy and the joy knowing another life is living to her fullest potential, regardless of what stage of life she finds herself.

Collectively, through the prayers, responses, and life expressions of writers, like the ones mentioned in this section, we are encouraged to unearth our female selves. We are invited to take a stand for ourselves as Ensler (2005) writes in her introduction to *The Good Body*:

> This play… is my prayer, my attempt to analyze the mechanisms of our imprisonment, to break free so that we may spend more time running the world than running away from it; … This play is an expression of my hope, my desire, that we will all refuse to be corporate-cut out Barbie, that we will say no to the loss of the particular, whether it be to a voluptuous woman in a silk sari, or a woman with defining lines of character in her face, or a distinguishing nose, or olive-toned skin, or wild curly hair. I am going to take a deep breath and find a way to survive not being flat or perfect. I am inviting you to join me, to stop trying to be anything, anyone other that who you are. (p. xv)

Through our words and drawings as creative journal writers, what is our invitation to ourselves and the other women (and men) who may read our journals or hear them aloud? What is our prayer, our response, or life expression that allows for an unearthing of our female selves? When, in our own lives, have we chosen to surrender to the discipline of writing to unearth, reveal, disclose ourselves for the sake of ourselves

moving forward? When is writing alone with self and/or with others appropriate in the journey of unearthing ourselves? These are the questions I find myself walking toward as I search for more sand gardens in which to pause playfully.

Creative Journaling: Community Sand Gardens

> There is a genius in all of us. But in order to mature, genius needs a lifetime of dedicated practice. That's not the bad news—that's the good news. That "never good enough" is the beating heart that drives the passion. The goal is to claim writing as our art form, and to accept ourselves as artists. For many of us, the writer's journal is the studio in which we do the hard, consistent work of practice of our craft, patient with ourselves, but diligent toward the accomplishment of improving and realizing our craft. (Schneider, 2003, p. 63)

A writer is someone who writes (Schneider, 2003; Stafford, 2009/1978; Stafford, 2009/1986); yet, "like all other art forms, it requires practice" (Schneider, 2003, p. 63)—a recurring disciplined activity, in which time is committed to the development of self through writing. As Schneider (2003) reminds us, the writer's journal is like a studio, or workshop, in which writers are able to work alone or in the presence of others creating, shaping, and honing their skill as writers in a community sand garden of sorts. It is the place where ideas are formed, gathered, connected, and changed. It is the place where our external words unfold to expose our internal thoughts about a topic or event; and, it is the space in which our unspoken feelings of the writing process are felt—and, sometimes understood. Like an apprenticeship, the experience of working through the journal writing process informs the writer concerning her technique, her own personal gifting as writer, and her attributes specific to who she is as a person. It is the pause discussed earlier in this chapter that temporarily removes us, the creative journal writer, from the present realities of our current life status to imagine, re-invent, create, ponder, and/or just breathe in depths of our oceanic thoughts of who we truly are. It is the moment of risk,

the moment we allow our internal images and words of who we are to unfold into the external realities of our now; the moment we feel safe enough to self-indulge; the moment we accept the consequences of exposure—good or bad; the moment we embrace ourselves alone as one or in community with others. In this case, the apprenticeship is a workshop with one (writing alone) or a workshop with some (writing with others) in a group.

As a workshop with one, the journal writer chooses the workshop model that nurtures her independence of writing alone. As a workshop with some, she chooses a journal writing workshop model that nurtures her solidarity to writing with others simultaneously—follow journal writers (amateurs and/or professionals such as workshop or group facilitators). In the world of journal writing, these two journal writing program models—a workshop for one (an individual) and a workshop for some (a group of persons)—provide a space for journal writers to hone their skill and develop their knowledge of what it means to journal write alone and/or with others.

In many ways, the task of writing is similar to making a decision to walk into an abyss, a black hole of the unknown, with the understanding that a wellspring—of reassuring knowledge—awaits; and, the hope that you will re-emerge, or re-appear, transformed anew. The initial steps are built on fear, trepidation, anxiety, concern, and however else an individual describes this feeling of being lost, blinded by darkness and the inability to ward off the edginess of vulnerability. Writing-alone-with-self or writing-alone-with-others, is a good way of building a method of self-encouragement and self-discipline for the craft of writing as it relates to us personally.

The commitment to write *is* the commitment to self. In other words, we take the time to pause, show-up, and participate in our own lives. We allow the language of our deep compassions to be embodied in our whole being; we give ourselves permission to dispel, oust, and release the words that slowly kill us; we accept and acknowledge that "life and death is in the power of tongue" (Proverbs 18:21, Kings James Version); we decide not to wither in thought, but to blossom in spirit; and, we choose to take a stand for our words from the past, in the present, and into the future. As Schneider (2003) suggests, "To grow as a writer, we must open our hearts, grow in our capacity to learn, and deepen our courage" (p. 5).

> There is a danger in going down into the unknown. What we will find there, in the unconscious where creation happens, may call for all our skill, all our intuition. It may change us; it may redefine our lives. But I believe we have no other choice if we are to be artists/writers. …The act of writing is a tremendous adventure into the unknown, always fraught with danger. But the deeper you go and the longer you work at your art, the greater will be your treasure. (Schneider, 2003, p. 5)

For the most part, "The roots of a useful discipline lie in understanding ourselves, and that is a gentle matter" (Schneider, 2003, p. 40). Therefore, using a form of "journal therapy [or] the use of the journal, or diary, to facilitate holistic mental health and self-reliance" (Adams, 1990, p. xiii) solely or as an adjunct to clinical therapy (if needed) is helpful for understanding ourselves as we grow personally (Hymer, 1991) and professionally (Moon, 2006). Through understanding the need to commit to writing, I wonder: What features of creative journaling assist a woman to commit to building her sand gardens either in a writing workshop program, alone with self or alone in the presence of others? When given a choice to decide which workshop program best suits her for a particular life story, what considerations does she give to thought and action? What are the forgiving and loving aspects of writing that allow us to be meticulous and

methodical about whom we are as individuals? For me, with these questions, I must first explore and understand the difference between each writing workshop—journal writing programs for one and journal writing programs for one in the midst of some, who are often described as others.

Journal Writing Programs For One

As pioneers in the journal-writing field, Adams (1990), Baldwin (2006/1991), Rainer (2004), Cameron (1995), Pennebaker and Evans (2014) each developed a journal-writing program, that caters to the individual process of personal development, or "to enhance and develop self" (Moon, 2006, p. 48). Each program uses the workbook method—a self-guided tool for guiding, exploring, and practicing the journal writing process—for delivery and active participation using the tenets, or principles, of the program. The main focus of each program varies; however, the common thread is the effective use of journal writing as a process to process one's self-development through writing and mindfully be/become refreshed as a person.

In a sense, each writer and program hold "a collective vision of the individual's self-knowledge and spiritual awakening" (Adams, 1990, p. xiv) through the uses of journal writing for personal development. For instance, with the operative word highlighted in the following paragraphs, the program's foci are to facilitate, encourage, offer, present, urge, and assist us in having a journaling experience that not only allows a process for pausing to write in a journal, but also cultivates a lifestyle of keeping a journal that massages the words and images of our individual lives.

Adams (1990) offers a program that **facilitates** the development of a healthy relationship with self and "the transpersonal Self" (p. xiv) through various journal

techniques. She defines the transpersonal Self as "that part of each of us that transcends time and space" and links us with "that which is known by many names: God, Spirit, the Universe, Infinite Intelligence, the Tao, Higher Self, Christ Consciousness, the All" (p. xiv). This type of program mirrors my own personal journaling experience—using journaling techniques to cultivate my sense of self and nurture my personal relationship with God.

Baldwin (1991/2006) **encourages** "a commitment to journal writing for self-awareness" (p. 8). With the process of putting words to paper, self-awareness is discovered. Through self-awareness, the participant is able "to write less about the world of external events and more about the world of internal reaction" (p. 8). She, the writer, asks questions and allows herself to break free from the constraints of pretense. As we learn to take what Baldwin calls "appropriate responsibility" (p. 19) for what is in our power to control or manage, we are allowing ourselves to accept "our ability to redefine, reaccept, and reempower [sic] ourselves" (p. 19).

Rainer (2004) **offers** "a practical psychological tool that enables you to express feelings without inhibition, recognize and alter self-defeating habits of mind, and come to know and accept that self which is you" (pp. 3-4), while "develop[ing] skills of self-expression" (p. 4). She believes that each person intuitively develops methods and uses for a diary based on individual life needs. In addition, she believes an individual's methods of journaling will alter as a person's life and needs alter. The essential keys to re-creating yourself through journal writing are: (a) flexibility, (b) an openness to adventure, and (c) a willingness to experiment, play, take imaginative chances, and

follow your path (Rainer, 2004). With Rainer's journaling technique, the only restrictions for writing the journal are the constraints the participant places on her self.

Cameron (1995) **presents** the journal as a creative companion in which the participant writes three pages a day, first thing in the morning. Referred to as the Morning Pages Journal, this journaling technique is "just early-morning thinking set down on page" (viii). It is a form of mediation used to remove "whatever nebulous worries, jitters, and preoccupations stand between" (p. vii) the participant and her day. The technique provides clarity as the writer releases unwanted, distracting thoughts. Coupled with setting aside time weekly—a one or two-hour block—for an excursion, or "play date," that "celebrates and nurtures the creative self" (p. ix), the journal helps in providing a powerful experience "of creative flow underlying and informing life" (p. ix).

Lastly, but not least of the programs, Pennebaker and Evans (2014) **assist** individuals who have experienced "trauma or an emotional upheaval" (p.vii) to try and experience some form of expressive writing as a way "to get through some of the conflict, stress, or pain [they] are feeling" (p. vii). The guiding principle is to express self in an honest and transparent manner.

Each of the five programs uses applicable journal writing workshop practices for personal development effectively; and, if desired, can be used within a group format. As Adams and Barreiro (2013) confirm, "Workbooks offer well-crafted, self-paced writing programs for individual users, with facilitation of guides and curricula for anyone who wishes to organize peer-writing circles to explore the material in community" (p. xiv). For instance, Rainer's (2004)—The New Diary—engages the journal writer in a broad

spectrum of discussions and practices to address the various diary/journal writing techniques.

> …the New Diary is a safe place to free your creativity and experience the full range of your imagination. It allows you to develop an ease with writing and the habit of writing simply from using what you already have—your own experience. As you discover your natural voice in the diary, you can also begin to focus on your genuine interests and to collect material for many creative uses, including poems, short stories, novels, and visual artworks. (Rainer, 2004, p. 4)

Rainer's (2004) statement not only appreciates the effects of journal writing on personal development, but it also addresses the harvesting of written art forms that germinate in the journal and arise through writing, highlighting both the "therapeutic and creative benefits of keeping the New Diary" (p. 4). As a writer, whose time is often limited, I usually choose to engage in set-your-own-pace workshops for one to ensure writing on a daily bases.

Journal Writing Programs for One in The Presence of Some

Writers are great lovers. (Goldberg, 2005, p. 102)

Goldberg (2005) informs, "Writing is a communal act" (p. 102). For the most part, as a communal act, writing unfolds freedom, the ability to freely commune, collaborate, cooperate, empathize, and share collectively. It is like a relationship seeping with love felt and experienced deeply between two persons (Goldberg, 2005; O'Donohue, 2004; Progoff, 1975/1992; Schneider, 2003; van Manen, 1997).

> Writers are great lovers. They fall in love with other writers. That's how they learn to write. They take on a writer, read everything by him or her, read it over again until they understand how the writer moves, pauses, and sees. That's what being a lover is: stepping out of yourself, stepping into someone else's skin. Your ability to love another's writing means those capabilities are awakened in you. It will only make you bigger; it won't make you a copycat. The parts of another's writing that are natural to you will become you, and you will use some of those

> moves when you write. But not artificially. Great lovers realize that they are what they are in love with. …So writing is not just writing. It is also having a relationship with other writers. (Goldberg, 2005, pp. 102-103)

Of course, particular aspects, or pieces, of writing are done in solitude. However, it is commonly known that "most writers benefit from regular communication with other writers" (Schneider, 2003, p. 177). However, the decision of choosing a writing workshop, group, or class is not a small matter to consider. It requires a careful investigation of finding an environment that fosters unconditional personal growth (which may lead to professional growth) regardless of one's induction writing level (beginner, intermediate, or advance). As Schneider (2003) reminds:

> …too much solitude—or too much conversation with people who do not write, and too little with those who do—can lead to depression and despair. Having a place to listen thoughtfully to new work by others and having an option of receiving response to your own writing can be invigorating, encouraging, and tremendously helpful. On the other hand, the wrong sort of group, workshop, or class can do damage. (p. 177)

If anything, each individual writer should maintain a high standard for her status as participant. She should avoid situations not conducive to safe learning, or learning circumstances that stifle one's ability to learn. When it comes to choosing environments/spaces that may have an influential impact on her personal development, a writer must make wise decisions to protect her well-spring, or the internal source from which her words come forth externally (Heidegger, 1962; King James Bible, 2009; O'Donohue, 2004). As great lovers, of others and self, writers should consider participating in workshops, which exhibit sanctuary like qualities such as a safe haven—a place of a refuge, asylum, or retreat—to enrich and build, not tear down one's person.

Unfortunately, though there are several writing workshop books that include journal writing segments, like Schneider's (2003) *Writing Alone And With Others*, the

literature does not offer many journal writing workshop books that are specific to writing alone in groups of other writers—the some who choose to write in the company of others. However, there are two effective, or operational, books that provide examples of what it means to use and experience journal writing for the purposes of personal development in a workshop setting for some: Progoff's (1992) *Intensive Journal Process*, which is commonly known through its accompanying workbook, *At A Journal Workshop: Writing To Access The Power Of The Unconscious And Evoke Creative Ability*—simply known as *At a Journal Workshop,* and Cutler, Monk, and Shira's (2014) *Journalling [sic] in a Circle of Women* process, which is simply called by its book title *Writing Alone Together*.

At a journal workshop. The Intensive Journal Workbook is an active writing process; it is "a practical way of getting in touch on a deeper level with beliefs and patterns of thinking that may be hidden from our conscious awareness" (Juline, 1992, p. 3). Once this process reveals the beliefs and patterns, each participant is able to "take steps to eliminate or alter the ones that limit her" (p. 3). She is able to use the safety of the workshop environment to delve into the newfound understandings of herself. During an interview, Progroff states that he compares it, the process, to:

> ... entering a sanctuary, because it provides a safe haven from the pressures of the outside world where we can quietly assess our relationship to life. Working with the process enriches our inner life immeasurably, helping us to stay in touch with that underlying reality which is our personal source of meaning and strength. ... When we reflect on our inner experiences and list and describe them in writing, the writing itself tends to add to the experience. We find ourselves to be more in contact than we originally suppose. ...one experience leads to another. (Juline, 1992, p. 3)

From Progroff's perspective, attending a workshop is "the most effective way to begin" (Juline, 1992, p. 5) using a workbook for three reasons: (a) "the opportunity to draw the present situation of your life into focus by working privately" (p. 5); (b) "the

support and energy [felt] from others working quietly in their own lives" (p. 5); and, (c) "the opportunity to learn the numerous techniques of the *Intensive Journal* process, including the Feedback Method" (p. 5). The Feedback Method is the process that "enables you to use the workbook on your own as a tool for personal and spiritual growth" (p. 5); it is the section that provides "a means of drawing upon the structure of the journal process to generate energy, and to draw the movement of life" (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 31). In general, the participants will complete the face-to-face workshop with an in-depth, practical overview of the journal workbook and its dimensions. In particular, the methodical movement of the activities from one dimension of the workbook to the next requires the working atmosphere of the workshop to be in silence, allowing participants the ability to dedicate themselves to working independently on self, in a group setting.

At Journal Workshop, the atmosphere of "private dedication" (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 37) to self opens the gates to personal vulnerability. If a situation occurs, where a participant is crying, the basic rule is to "follow the principle of honoring the integrity of each person's inner process" (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 38)—let the person experience the feeling and "find answers to the problems in the rhythm that each life requires" (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 38). In other words, each person is allowed the space needed to address her needs accordingly.

> We keep our own counsel, and thus we give one another a far greater gift, the gift of freedom and time. We also give one another the silent support that comes from trusting the self-healing wisdom of life. …we express not only our love for the other person, but also our respect for the integrity of the life process at work in each of us. (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 38)

In addition, this freedom is extended to the request to read; participants are not required to share, but are required to "honor and express the inner principle of his or her own being" (Progoff, 1975/1992, p. 40). Ultimately, the workshop allows its participants the opportunity to learn themselves and pushes them toward personal development—owning who they are and making changes for the better, as needed.

Journaling in a circle of women. Like *The Intensive Journal Workbook*, *Writing Alone Together* is an active writing process; it is "an invitation to experience journal writing as a communal practice for creativity, compassion, and connection" (Cutler, Monk, & Shira, 2014, p. 2). In particular, Culter, Monk, and Shira define the process as "a practice of gathering with other women to write, read, and create a sense of community through the transformational power of journal writings" (p. 3). It is a process that acknowledges the discovery and remembrance of our lives through our individual personal poetic stories. It is a practice that teaches "self-love and acceptance," while ushering the participants "into a deeper compassion and care with and for another" (p. 4). It is a catalyst for nurturing ourselves as females individually and collectively. It is communal, the one individual involving the some—the plus one, the collective, the open, the shared without groupthink, or the desire to have "conformity to prevailing points of view" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2002, p. 613). Each woman's thoughts, feelings, body, and spirit are essential to her being. It matters when she is writing in private and/or when she is writing and sharing in public.

> In North American culture that emphasizes individualism, separatism and hierarchies of power, bringing our bodies, words and stories together in the same room is significant. Coming together as equals with mutual respect is radical. Over time, Writing Alone Together creates a structure that transforms who we are

> individually and collectively. As women, we need ways of coming together to collaborate, heal and evolve. With this practice we bring healing to the world. This is the essence of belonging. (Cutler, Monk, & Shira, 2014, p. 5)

For the most part, like The Intensive Journal Workbook process, "Writing Alone Together is the sacred, creative work of personal and collective storytelling" (p. 5) through journaling.

Self-cultivating activities require a resolved disposition. Either alone in a workshop program for one or together in a workshop for some, an individual must believe that her journey through journal writing is a process which can and will enhance herself personally. Basically, a journal writing workshop program is a tool that facilitates, encourages, offers, presents, urges and assists individuals with using the journal as a tool to move forward into the next dimensions of themselves personally and/or professionally (Adams & Barreiro, 2013; Moon, 2006). From the onset to the end of the program, each type of program encourages the writer to cultivate her own garden, or place in the world, through her own words. These journal writing programs—both writing with one and writing with some—give us hope in knowing "writing is a means of self-discovery, personal growth, gaining control over one's self and experience, [and] sharing words" (Goba, 1973, pp. 80-81). Regardless of the program, it is imperative that we find writing workshops that encourage us as writers, creative journal writers.

As an educational researcher, my research and actions should "be guided by pedagogical standards" (van Manen, 1997, p. 4). In other words, I want my research to have didactic qualities that not only enrich the lives of the participants in my research focus and the readers of my research, but also for my students and myself. I am a writer. I am a writer-teacher-researcher who journals. I am a journal writer, a woman who writes

for personal development as an individual, professional, and social being. I am the woman committed to writing—building her sandcastle, unearthing her female during her moments of creative journal pauses.

In this chapter, I continued the discussion of creative journaling as a practice of pause or withdrawal while exploring and interpreting the phenomenon through the voices and influences of others. My overview of literature and other textual sources, including poetic renderings, concerning the topic, continues the journey of answering the question: **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

In chapter three, I continue the journey of finding a way to uncover the nature of my phenomenon. Using the metaphoric phrase *pausing in the sand to unearth*, I explore my methodology and the phenomenological underpinnings of my study. The work of philosophers, authors, and scholars assist me with developing a philosophical grounding for my creative journaling pause research.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE RESEARCH AND ITS METHODOLOGY
WRITING ON THE GROUND, INSCRIBING IN THE SAND—A PAUSE

> They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. …When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.
> (John 8:4-8; 10-11)

When I find myself at the edge of a question, wondering in a pause which direction I will travel in my own life, I turn to my life guide, life bracket, or life parameter—the Bible, also known as the Scriptures. Biblical verses and stories are the entryways into the sandy arena of understanding who I am. Therefore, this chapter begins with a biblical story that commences with an unnamed woman who is accused of adultery and finds herself at the edge, or threshold, of a question. The question opens a moment of pause as Jesus—the man known as the Messiah, the Son of God, and the living water by this point in the Scriptures—stoops to write in the ground, a place of revealing truth publicly. His moment of pause reminds me of my various moments of pause as I ponder a question and position myself to write in my journal, a sacred place of revealing truth privately. These moments are essential to the progression of life not only for myself, but also for the individuals with whom I engage. The story of the unnamed woman is found in the book of John (8:1-11). For this study, as quoted above, the focus begins at verse four—the point in which a) the experience is revealed, b) the question is asked, c) the writing pause is applied, and d) the ending action stems from thoughtfulness.

Connecting with Classical Literature: Reading Scripture, Writing Self

As noted earlier in chapter two, twenty-seven years ago, as an undergraduate student, I found myself like the woman in the story: (1) accused, not of adultery, but of serving an oppressive God, and (2) left with a question about my own life: How could I serve a God who oppresses women? This question resulted in my pausing and questioning the integrity and characteristics of the God I serve as a Christian woman. This process led to my extensive reading of Scripture, writing in journals, creating poetry, and gaining a precious understanding of myself and my God.

The Scripture readings were numerous. Each focused on women who had encounters or who sought encounters with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—each who represents part of the trinity of one God within the Christian faith; and, the journal writing was a creative mix of poetry, prose, and drawings, none of which I can find at this moment. It is this process of reading and writing that leads me to a new understanding of myself and the biblical stories in which women are key figures. The women include, but are not limited to Eve, Hagar, Deborah, Hannah, Esther, Rahab, Mary the mother of Jesus, Anna, and the unnamed women such as the woman-at-the-well, the woman-taken-in-adultery, and the woman-with-the-issue-of-blood. Each woman, named or not, is faced with a question, a moment of pause, and a decision that changes the course of her life forever. However, despite the challenge of the question before her, each woman rests on the understanding that her encounter or pursuant of God and her commitment to living in her own truth would make her free. Each woman chooses to abandon the areas of bondage in her life, to live instead according to God's

Truth (capitalized to emphasize each woman's belief in an overarching truth), allowing her life story to became a beacon of light, or hope, for herself as well as others.

For instance, by the end of the Bible story mentioned earlier, the accused woman accepts grace and reclaims herself. The writing pauses of Jesus give her accusers no recourse to proceed with the accusation against her. The inscriptions in the ground make them remember and "bear record" of who they are as individuals. In other words, when we "bear record" of ourselves, we unearth and expose the truth about who we are to ourselves and to others. If the woman is accused of sin, the accusers must accuse themselves also. With this thoughtful discovery, none of her accusers could toss the first stone: They, too, are sinners.

> And they which heard it, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman [was] standing in the midst. …Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. (John 8: 9; 12-14)

As Jesus chooses to "bear record" of himself to the Pharisees, each woman I studied also rises to the occasion and chooses to "bear record" of herself. She, the woman, understands that her own record is true; she is confident in knowing that she and God know the truth about who she is as a woman and an individual being. Therefore, she enters the arena, or the *harena*—the feminine Latin word for sand, sandy place, or place of combat—to live in peace with herself and with others. As she stands in the sometimes-challenging sandy arenas of life, the woman breathes—liberated, knowing the truth of her journey will fill the space and save her.

> If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31b-32)

From a personal perspective, my encounters with God occur as I read the Scriptures and experience various episodes within my life that may (or may not) include moments of epiphanies though the arts (instrumental music, songs, theater, poetry, and literature). For the most part, the Scriptures help me to experience a freedom—a way of making me free as I come to know the truth of who I am. For instance, Jeremiah 29 verses 13 through 18 were pivotal to my understanding of the creation of my inner most being, cared for and respected from the beginning:

> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you. (Jeremiah 29: 13-18)

In the moments of a pause where I read biblical Scripture and engage in my creative journal, I am able to rest in the freedom of who I am (if only for a short period of time); and, in that freedom, I am able to produce mindfully, or make—make words, make drawings, and make peace with myself and others (people and things).

Even the word "make" is a way-maker, a setting into motion. It is a construct, a motion to create, and a declaration to build. Within its existence, there is an acknowledgement of something to come forth, an acceptance of being, a birth of trueness, and a stance of naturalness. It is a moment of poetics, the unearthing, revealing, and freeing of the truths about the personal self and others. It is an acceptance and a willingness to let our selves be. It is the creation of who we were, who we are, and who

we will be. It is the path to pause revealed. It is a way that allows us to reach something (Heidegger, 1959/1971a). It is phenomenology and myself finding a way to each other in the truth of lived experience.

A Personal Journey to Phenomenology

The writer-in-me is fascinated with the use of words and numbers to question the lived experiences of life. I am ecstatic when life inquiries unfold into a journey and a pathway of inquisitive questioning, reflecting, and writing—a way of investigating the interworking of self lived. For me, it is an amazing miracle, or phenomenon in itself, to witness the use of alphabetic letters to form words and numeric figures to express mathematical terms to discover, rediscover, and/or own the truth about one's self. Therefore, I believe, it is only natural that phenomenology found its way to me and I to it as I question myself about who I am as a researcher. The questions are phrased in "Am I Not" statements:

> *Am I not* a creative being with a critical, inquisitive, and reflective mind, constantly deciphering information?
>
> *Am I not* drawn to the lived experiences of others and the collaborative lifelines of their stories to make sense of the world in which I-we live?
>
> *Am I not* impressed with the technology of the body to live through experience deciphering information through a detailed and, sometimes, complex thought process?
>
> *Am I not* challenged to pause and seek a path to the answers of my questions?

The questions not only help me to focus on who I am as a researcher, but also lead me to a personal understanding. I am a researcher who must be true and authentic to self. It is my nature to question, pause, reflect, and write.

The conversation, the answer: Phenomenology. As I expressed my concern and need to find a methodology for my dissertation research that would allow a nonconventional way of questioning and exploring the focus of my study, my then work supervisor (a former student of phenomenology) asked if I had ever considered phenomenology. My response was: "Phenomenology? No. Can I do that? Does it fit in with my beliefs?" Until that moment, it was nowhere on my radar; I had no idea what phenomenology was or knew what it meant. Now, almost five years later, I have learned it is one of the chosen methodologies for several faith-based topics (such as prayer, love, and living the religious life).

Moran (2000) asserts that phenomenology "claims, first and foremost to be a radical way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system" (p. 4).

> Phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophizing, which emphasizes the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. (Moran, 2000, p. 4)

Miraculously, phenomenology found me through a conversation about my doctoral studies, research, and poetic writings. It was the "radical," or far-reaching, answer I needed to feel and be at home within my research. It is the research methodology that will provide a pathway for me to explore, call to the open, and own the complexities of writing as a tool. For me, writing as a tool is used to pause, embrace, nurture, and care for one's self as a woman sitting at the well-spring of who she is as a person while reading Scripture and writing in a creative journal.

This chapter is a philosophical grounding for my dissertation research, providing a basis for why and how hermeneutic phenomenology is the most appropriate

methodology for my research. Anchoring and interweaving my thoughts with poetry, this chapter does the following: 1) connects the work of prevalent philosophers to the phenomenon itself—addressing in various sections the researcher, the participant, the writing, and the workshop, and 2) provides a practical understanding of the activities in the methodological structure of phenomenology.

The researcher: Asking the question, entering the pause. My writing is often sparked with a question, a point of interest or curiosity that becomes a point of entry into a state of pause—a creative journaling pause. The creative journaling pause allows me the poet-writer to delve into, investigate, explore, and examine the less traveled and/or unknown areas of my thinking that are buried deep with my personal garden(s). It also allows for what I call the *As I* phrases to come into my space of time and place of being to take root: *As I* question, I pause. *As I* pause, I actively rest. *As I* actively rest, I think. *As I* think, I write. *As I* write, I journal. *As I* journal, I create. *As I* create, I bring forth. *As I* bring forth, I unearth. *As I* unearth, I allow a revealing of my experiences to exist and become a story—or at least a part of one. *As I* allow a revealing, I am.

Within one writing experience, the *As I* phrases can be simple and/or filled with complex variables—always interesting and intermittently frightening. Yet, as mentioned in chapter two, my own life journey has been and is being shaped and moved-forward by my own personal writings (those shared and unshared with others). Therefore, no matter the experience, I allow myself the occurrence of the journey. These moments of writing allow for a questioning cycle and a process of pause to take form in my life. As I allow a revealing, I am.

In thinking back on my lived experiences, from girlhood to womanhood, these *As I am* phrases erect a field path, or pathway, in my own personal gardens. Even today, this pathway nurtures the poetic license of my own life story weaving in between my life journeys as I connect with other people and things of this world. It is a pathway, or as Heidegger (1945/2010) calls it "a feldweg" (p. 120) laden with pauses initiated by questions aroused by things or responses such as conversations, acts of nature, or unsettling feelings that appear in moments of time. For this research, in thinking of these moments, I am led into a process of asking: What is the question or questions that initiate(s) an individual to open and reveal herself in writing not only to herself, but others as well? Is a pause or a break in the moment a questioning of what we thought in the past or currently think in the present about ourselves? Is the creative journaling pause a contemplative encounter with our personal self (or nature) that stimulates us to return to the core of ourselves, calling us to choose who we are instead of what others want us to be? My poem, *A I Pause*, unearths my thoughtfulness to this *As I* process:

Leaves change colors.
As I pause, movement continues—
Is this pathway mine?

Is there hope for me?
As I pause, reflection lives—
The wellspring I see.

I am a writer.
As I pause, I return to self—
poetic birds sing.

I view myself whole.
As I pause, I inquire—
In sunlight or moonlight, I walk
asking the question—
Who am I?
(S. Riley, 2015)

For me, this question of Who am I? seeks to reveal story, a life story, through a process of pausing to uncover the layers of an opening—a space adjoined to the nature of things in our individual lives. Creative journaling can be a woman's beginning to unearthing the stories or the nature of things connected to unanswered questions and inquires of who she is as an individual being. Yet, I wonder: Is the question the place of intervention within a space of interference that allows us to rest for a moment in truth? In a concentrated amount of time, what does it feel like to allow different types of pauses an opportunity to teach us something about ourselves as we learn and experience moments of respite in our lives? What is it like to allow the various types of pauses to lead us into an understanding of self? Is a creative journaling pause itself an unanswered question of *Who am I?* now answered? And, so, with all my wondering, I have focused my study on the phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

The Way—The Question, The Methodology: The Philosophical Discussion

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a human science, studies persons (van Manen, 1997). It allows for us researchers to "question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which brings the world as world into being for and in us" (van Manen, p. 5). Our questions lead us on an intentional journey that connects us to other individuals in a meaningful way. Van Manen (1997) explains, "From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5).

For the most part, our inquiries as researchers allow for an opening into the unknown. Though, as we approach this unknown, we must be willing to allow our prejudices, or personal filters, concerning the topic to unfold and enter the conversation, not as a determining factor, but as a broadening of understanding. We must recognize that our personal filters can serve as markers of possible areas for reconditioning or growth as we discover life through our questions. As Gadamer (1975/2013) explains:

> The essence of the *question* is to open possibilities and keep them open. If a prejudice becomes questionable in view of what another person or a text says to us, this does not mean that it is simply set aside and the text or the other person is accepted as valid in its place. Rather, historical objectivism shows its naivete in accepting this disregarding of ourselves as what actually happens. In fact our own prejudice is properly brought into play by being put at risk. Only by given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself. (p. 310)

Our prejudices can serve as way makers to explore the closed areas of our lives or the areas of our lives we remove from any possibility of change. For writers, the issue of "risk" and "freedom" may come into play as we begin to question, or open the possibilities of the unknown. The conversation of "risk" and "freedom" opens into a discussion of whether or not taking the risk to write is a means to name, or to speak one's truth, and to let be is freedom. For some, it is. For others, it is not. Yet, however so, the writing continues as decisions are made about which direction, pathway, or way a writer chooses to unfold her life stories into the open via her own effigies of words. As it relates to exploring the unknown, the choices are sometimes presented as though two roads diverged, or separated, with different consequences, concerns, and/or opportunities. As the poet Robert Frost (1916/1993) describes in the poem "The Road Not Taken," we all have decisions to make concerning our next steps on the road of life. Using certain words and stanzas from his poem, the story behind each decisional step unfolds.

First, we find ourselves at a crossroad, or a point of decision, where a choice for one road or another must be made.

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
> And sorry I could not travel both
> And be one traveler, long I stood (p. 1)

Second, we make a decision to take one road over the other. Our method of decision is often laden with deep thoughts of why one road is chosen and the other is not. We delve as deep and look as far as we can into the reason(s) of why we made a particular choice.

> And looked down one as far as I could
> To where it bent in the undergrowth;
>
> Then took the other, as just as fair,
> And having perhaps the better claim,
> Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
> Though as for that the passing there
> Had worn them really about the same[;] (p. 1)

Third, on occasion while on the road chosen, there is a stint of comparison, or a time of thinking back to the point the decision was made. We think of possibly trying the other road; yet, knowing that with the various experiences the current road provides, the chance of returning to the other road is rare.

> And both that morning equally lay
> In leaves no step had trodden black.
> Oh, I kept the first for another day!
> Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
> I doubted if I should ever come back. (p. 1)

Each road is a way that leads to a particular place; and, each road offers its own experience. Yet, both roads begin with a pause that stands at the edge of a question: Which path shall I take to journey, to explore, to reconcile myself to the life I have lived, currently live or want to live in the future? Within a question, there is an expectation of

movement toward something in a defined or undefined space of time. The movement is bodily in thought, deed, and/or voice (oral or written).

For me, as a poet and researcher, I am intrigued with traveling the various roads in the human life world to uncover and reveal the lived experiences of phenomena expressed through poetic writings such as poetry. As the person in the poem, I too understand that "way leads on to way," each road possibly leading to another road, another way opening to something or somewhere else. A way is the manner in which something is done—the method, the system, or an approach of exploring. Through its existence, *a way* "allows us to reach something" (Heidegger, 1959/1971a, p. 126), to get to something, or progress toward something. Like the poem expresses, a way may surface as a commitment, unearthing promise and declaring a resolve to take a journey despite the unknowns.

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
> I took the one less traveled by,
> And that has made all the difference. (p. 1)

Creative journaling is a way that uses language—images and words—to help individuals rest in their life experiences, regardless of the nature of the situation considered good, bad, or indifferent. It gives the woman, who is journaling, the space to pause on the road of her life. This place of pause encourages stillness. In the place of the pause, she is dwelling in the place leading to an opening where silence resides (Sontag, 1969). Silence weaves stillness; stillness unearths answers to the questions that often challenge us at the core of who we are. It is a weft revealed through the language woven across the experiences of life. In essence, silence is a weft often woven across the

experiences of life, which are often revealed, unearthed, in the stillness of a pause—a creative journaling pause.

Unearthing the Weft

In weaving, a thread, or yarn, woven horizontally across the width of a fabric, is called the weft (American Heritage Dictionary, 2002; p. 1555). Its purpose is to fill in a design, making the body of the fabric (http://www.wisegeek.org/what-are-warp-and-weft.htm).

> The weft is built thread by thread, weaving in and out between the warp threads, touching each one as it passes by; in the same way our daily actions weave through our values, touching each one on the way. (http://www.weavingalife.com/about/weaving/#.Vs3dUhisMiE)

In a sense, a question is the weft, weaving in and out, in our lives—filling in and revealing the design of who we are as individuals. From time to time, every human being receives a question that changes the course of his or her life. This question is provocative and simple with life or death consequences. Similar to all other questions, it begins with a moment of pause that illuminates each fork in the road of life; pushes toward a decision of the heart; and, pulls from a distraction of the mind. Yet, unlike all other questions, which are often answered without much thought, this question requires time and presence—the time to think and the presence of a mindful now. This question is a beginning and/or an end of how an individual, in this case a woman, continues to explore the road of life she is currently traveling. Within her, fear roars like a lion. Her body defies progression, becoming unmovable as though glued to the ground. Her mind is jumbled, like a tethered feather. Thus, from within herself, she is summoned. From within, risk flourishes wrapped in love, strength, and a saying. Risk becomes the tug or push that speaks. The question sets the journey; the journey sets the answer. From within

every woman who chooses the practice of creative journaling, she accepts the risk of pausing to be mindful of who she is as she travels around the sand dunes of life. She accepts the question: Who am I? The question becomes a weft in her life—at times unearthing a silence as she touches or steps into a place of stillness to explore her life in the open. For her, the Christian woman who journals creatively, it means she is resting with herself—sometimes in the midst of others, but always in the presence of God. For it is in this time, she accepts and practices the respite care of Psalms 46:10, "Be still and know I am God." The question is the *dash* in her life, the beginning of a pause that leads to further exploration, excavation, and excerpts of personal life stories.

> The dash, comma, and parenthesis are sister marks belonging to the family of Separators. Each of them sets off parenthetical matter. … The dash meanwhile, the most dramatic and spirited of the three, boldly steps in when the parenthetical matter wants to be set off from emphasis, or when there's to be a sudden break in the flow of the sentence. …In fact, of all the punctuation marks, it's the most indispensable for brightening our prose. (Trimble, 2000, p. 120)

For every road traveled concerning the experience in one's life, there seems to be a spirited dash offering a pause for exploration, reflection, and a saying (or a showing). This understanding is all the more reason for me to choose phenomenology. As van Manen (1997) asserts, "All phenomenological human science efforts are really explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations" (p. 101). Therefore, the question, or the dash in a woman's life, is the unforeseen yet elegant explanation of the demarcation in the sand, where the water meets the land and the waves rescind back to the ocean. It is the beloved pause breathing through metaphoric exploration. It is language, spoken or not, giving us a chance, an opportunity, to find the pathway to being in the world as ourselves. It is the weft in the life world of a creative journaling pause experience; it is the connection of the

word and the image impressed on the page of the journal weaving in and out of the internal thought made external; it is a sand painting in the making—healing my hurts, expressing my joys. Hence, as a phenomenologist, who studies the lived experience, the question is my entry point—my opening to the pathway that leads me into various life worlds, exploring the phenomenon called the creative journaling pause.

Unearthing the Four Existentials: The Fundamental LifeWorld Themes

Within phenomenological writing, there are four lifeworld existentials that are helpful guides for reflection in the research process (van Manen, 1997). The existentials are lived space or spatiality, lived body or corporeality, lived time or temporality, and lived other or communality. Lived space is our subjective awareness, or perception, of an area—how we feel about a particular space; it is "felt space" (van Manen, p. 102). Lived body is our physical body or "bodily presence" (van Manen, p. 103) in the world. Lived time is our "subjective time" and "our temporal way of being in the world" (van Manen, p. 104); it is the feel of time and the memorable—or not so memorable—scope of the past, present, and/or future influences on our existence. Lived other is our "lived relation" with other individuals (van Manen, p. 104); it is the personal engagement we have with another being.

For me, keeping a journal is an act of exploration, reflection, and a saying as I aim to connect with I AM—the *I AM* of who God is and the *I AM* of who I am. It is a physical and spiritual act of traveling the unknown. During moments of stillness, it is a means to explore lived events as I reflect, saying my internal truths externally through the words and images of the heart—the crux of who I am. In conjunction with my heart and hands, it is the holder of my internal truth; it is the crus giving me the "legs," or support, to live

my life externally. It is a way to unearth the meaning of my life, which is often buried deep within the depths of the physical being of my body. It is the exposing of our individual nature, moods, emotions, and thoughts through the embodiment of the hand rendering the spiritual self—the self that is immaterial (or without body); the self that is a spirit seeking to connect with God, who Himself is spirit (http://www.gotquestions.org; John 4:24, KJV), the self that is true. The journal is a space for dwelling; it is a place of pause within the continuous movement of time; it is a showing of life experiences through a saying of symbols—the words and images mirroring life on the page. Like the physical body is home to the mind and spirit, the creative journal is a physical body housing the sayings of our being as we pause to understand the meaning of our lives. It is our ground—a place of support, a place of saying, embracing and showing our grasp for meaning. The following sections further unearth why phenomenology makes a way for the study of the creative journaling pause.

Phenomenology unearths The Call To Find And Reveal Being

The proverbial question, Who am I?, is a call to begin the inquisitive search for being. At times, it is a burden, or charge, that appears at various times in one's life unwelcomed, unwanted, uninvited and undesired; and, yet, like the prickly pebbles on cobblestone roads, each step toward accepting the burden awakens our soul (or mind), stimulates our physical temple (body), and blesses our life-force (spirit)—allowing us to remember the past, know the present, and expect the future. It is when "we are ourselves the entities to be analyzed" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 67) acknowledge *Dasein*, "a Heideggerian term which refers to that entity or aspect of our humanness which is capable of wondering about its own existence and inquiring into its own Being" (van

Manen, 1997, p. 176).

Heidegger (1962) asserts, “Being is always the Being of an entity” (p. 29). In other words, the nature of someone or something exists prior to an encounter with someone or something else. We are ourselves—who we are—despite how others try to define or name us; and, also, despite how we try to mask ourselves. Our Being, as a human, is aware, understanding, and knowledgeable of itself as a being. Unlike other entities, *Dasein* has a special distinctiveness:

> …in its very Being that Being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of *Dasein*’s Being, and this implies that *Dasein*, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which *Dasein* understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 32)

Though, sometimes, the burden to accept the call toward inquiring, examining, and probing about one’s being is messy and complicated, “*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 33). Thus, the acceptance is an affirmation of concern for being-in-the world, or “a way in which *Dasein’s* character is defined existentially” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 92). It is amazing how an “understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of *Dasein’s* being” (p. 32). Though, I like to say: How could it *not* be? As humans, we are in fact inquisitive beings drawn to the unpretentious virtue, or integrity, of authenticity—relentlessly unearthing, exposing, and uncovering with despise the inauthentic, false, and deceitful ways of being-in-the-world with entities, people or things—who are either ourselves or others.

> When Being-in-the-world is exhibited phenomenologically, disguises and concealments are rejected because this phenomenon itself always gets ‘seen’ in a

> certain way in every *Dasein*. And it thus gets 'seen' because it makes up a basic state of *Dasein*, and in every case is already disclosed for *Dasein's* understanding of Being, and disclosed along with that Being itself. …*Dasein* itself—and this means also its Being-in-the-world—gets its ontological understanding of itself in the first instance from those entities which itself is *not* but which it encounters 'within' its world, and from the Being which they possess. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 85)

This understanding of being solidifies, or at least attempts to explain, why we, as humans, are constantly pursuing or wanting to pursue the need to be one's true self. Though, sometimes, as individuals who do not always understand the internal knowing of self or that yet unconcealed, we often question: How can I know about myself before myself and yet not be myself until I willingly accept the call from within myself to embark on a journey to uncover myself?

This question arises because, at times, it seems like we have lost ourselves to our everyday routine. Fortunately, within our being, we understand and know that we cannot be lost to the *I AM* of who we are as individuals. Understanding is a "reconciliation of differences" (American Heritage, 2002, p. 1496); knowing is "to discern the character or nature of" someone or something (American Heritage, 2002, p. 770). If only we each decided to take the time to pause in each of our worlds, in serendipitous moments, just to reconcile and discern who we are as individuals, accepting and writing the words that truly name us and rejecting those that do not. If only we could individually remember how incredibly happy we are and we become when a mask, or concealment of ourselves, is removed from our being by the purifying effect, or washing, of a word read, written, spoken, and/or heard. Each word gives us permission to withdraw for a moment and allows us to reflect on a dimension of time—past, present, future—in the now.

> A peculiar change takes place in the person who starts to write and enters the text: the self retreats or steps back as it were, without completely stepping out of its

> social, historical, biographic being. … As words draw us and carry us away, they seem to open up a space: a temporal dwelling space where we may have reality experiences, "realizations" that we never imagine possible. (van Manen, 2005, pp. 3-4)

Each word serves as a way to ignite a response from us as we lean in, embracing risk, to move toward our inquisitive nature to accept individually the call toward answering the proverbial question, Who am I? Creative journaling is a way for us to pause and continue the journey to unearth ourselves; it is a way for us to understand, or "perceive and comprehend the nature and significance" (American Heritage, 2002, p. 1496) of who we are, as individuals, in the world. It is a tool for us to reconcile and discern ourselves from the *they* we are not to the *me* that I am.

Lost in the they. For the most part, "The self is social" (Anton, 2001, p. 53); caring for others is essential to our being (Anton, 2001; Claremont de Castillejo, 1973; Heidegger, 1962). Therefore, the issue of being-in-the-world, or concerned for others, and losing oneself is a topic each woman must address to cultivate her true, or authentic, self. Typically, as humans, we find ourselves lost to self because we lack three things: 1) an understanding of what it means to care, 2) a knowledge of how to care without losing self to others, and 3) the wisdom of how to address the issue favorably—a lack of definition, practical steps, and insight. When lacking in these three areas, we find ourselves entangled in a web of difference and needing to discern who we are. Anton (2001) suggests that others can be a "source of self-transcendence as well as a source of self-stultification" (p. 54). The world, with its social structure, can help us to realize our undreamed potential, but it can also limit our capability to dream (Anton, 2001).

> The world itself is socialized. Others already have decompressed it, and they have done so in such a spatialized and temporalized manner (i.e., by their touching) that it offers me many sources of self-transcendence. (Anton, p. 56)

As we become involved in the care of others, we may become conscious of being lost to ourselves. However, we are oblivious to how it happened and how to be found when we do not have an understanding, knowledge, or wisdom of socializing ourselves through a healthy notion of what it means to care for others, the "they," in our lives. If not careful, we can become lost to the "they," which includes us individually as "they-self," our public selves—"the Self of everyday *Dasein*" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 167). As Heidegger (1962) informs:

> With *Dasein's* lostness in the "they", that factical potentiality-for-Being which is closest to it (the tasks, rules, and standards, the urgency and extent, of concernful and solicitous Being-in-the-world) has already been decided upon. … It remains indefinite who has 'really' done the choosing. So *Dasein* makes no choices, gets carried along by the nobody, and thus ensnares itself in inauthenticity. This process can be reversed only if *Dasein* specifically brings itself back to itself from its lostness in the "they." (pp. 312-313)

In a sense, creative journaling is the process that allows us to pause; and, it leads us in a way to language as a saying, a way of showing us what is present and what is absent from our lives. The creative journal pause gives us permission to acknowledge what exists and what does not. The question is: Will we accept the permission to be present?

> Saying is a showing. …Saying sets all present beings free into their given presence, and brings what is absent into their absence. (Heidegger, 1959/1971a, p. 126)

Interestingly, we are all the other (Heidegger, 1962), easily capable of losing ourselves in the care of others, becoming absent to ourselves. Therefore, our coming into an understanding of "authentic concern" is essential.

Authentic concern—solicitude. Solicitude is defined as "the care or concern, as for the well-being of another" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 2002, p. 1318). As humans, we are intricately caring or concerned about the welfare of others based on the

roles in our lives as members of various sects of society—family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, etc. In particular, most women are innate nurturers dedicated to assisting others. On the surface, the active involvement of individuals in the lives of others—in the form of care and concern—seems only helpful and true. Yet, once lived or experienced the showing begins to reveal the limitless boundaries where the lines are blurred between what is helpful and what is not.

In relation to care and concern, Heidegger (1962) speaks of the extreme possibility of *Dasein's* being when caring for others. It is natural for us to care for others. The issue is how we choose to care—do we take the issue from the other person or do we nurture, encourage, support the other person through the issue.

> Solicitude proves to be a state of *Dasein's* Being—one which, in accordance with its different possibilities, is bound up with its Being towards the world of its concern, and likewise with its authentic Being towards itself. Being with one another is based proximally and often exclusively upon what is a matter of common concern in such Being. ... Everyday Being-with-one-another maintains itself between the two extremes of positive solicitude—that which leaps in and dominates, and that which leaps forth and liberates. (p.159)

When we leap in and dominate, we "take over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158), ordering him controlled, dependent, and somewhat despondent. As Heidegger (1962) cautions, the outcomes for leaping in to care for the other person are two-fold:

1. He [the Other] steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to,
2. he can either take it over as something finished and at his disposal, or disburden himself of it completely. (p. 159)

Being overly involved causes the Other to *step back* and *step outside* of their own means to develop a solution within their own needs and wants. Unfortunately, this kind of care removes the Other from her (or his) own position of caring for herself (or himself),

oftentimes leaving persons unequipped to possibly solve the matter or solution on their own in the future.

On the other hand, we when leap forth and free, we assist and allow the Other to care for herself. The individual, known as the Other, comes to know herself while caring for herself; and, it is through this process of caring for one's self that is she able to become and be free (Heidegger, 1962). As Heidegger asserts, "This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care" (p.159). This type of care does not take away someone else's ability to care for her self. Instead, the care is given back to her, the Other, "authentically as [though] for the first time" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 159); the person is honored as a human being, not as a situation to be conquered or controlled. In other words, the outcome for leaping ahead to care for the Other pertains "to the existence of the Other, not to a 'what' with which he is concerned" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 159). Therefore, this struggle between caring for the Other in one way or another—to leap in or leap ahead—is the tension a woman must actively address to ensure that her Being—and the person for whom she cares—is not silenced, suffocated, or manipulated into something either one is not. Likewise, as Anton (2001) sought to clarify his thoughts concerning Heidegger's distinction between the two extremes of care, she, the woman, must also understand and know that, "By solicitude, I refer to the recognition that others are not things to be taken care of, but are (i.e., exist as) concernful flights outside themselves" (p. 157). With this understanding and knowledge, she is able to practice caring from a place of knowing herself liberated as well, metaphorically flying with herself among others.

In addition to Heidegger (1962) and Anton's (2001) discussion of concern,

Claremont de Castillejo (1997/1973) adds a dimension of practicality, or modes of practice, which help us to be conscious in our dealings, or relations, when in the world with others. For instance, she suggests two points of action we should employ when we are at the onset of vacillating between the true meaning of care or concern as it relates to a particular situation or person: (a) "disentangle ourselves and our own personal wishes from the problem" (pp. 143-144), and (b) "become as conscious as possible of where we ourselves stand" (p. 144). These points "provide a fixed point of reference, a post as it were stuck firmly into the sand around which a rope can be thrown from the little barques [sic] being tossed helplessly by waves of emotion" (p.144). In other words, focusing ourselves through an act of mindfulness will assist us with maintaining a healthy stance toward caring and being concerned for others, allowing others to act as needed in their own situations. As Cheung (2010) describes, mindfulness is "the practice of being fully present in each moment" (p. 2). Therefore, being-fully-present-in-the-moment will allow us—especially those of us who more often than not leap in instead of leap ahead—to refocus our energies to leap forward when caring for others. Thus, when we leap ahead, we are exhibiting the actions Claremont de Castillejo shows us through her words:

> If several friends can offer firm posts, though the posts may stand for different points of view, they may yet provide some strength and stability which will help the storm-tossed people to find their own solution. Not our solution, theirs. (Claremont de Castillejo, 1973, p. 144)

With her metaphoric words, Claremont de Castillejo (1973) makes it clear that we must reconcile within ourselves that "to have a deep concern for anyone is to keep him in one's heart without the interference of wishing, or still worse willing, any particular goal or outcome from him" (p. 144). She suggests each person must be an active agent in her own life, accepting "with faith in the purposefulness of life and the belief in the need for

[each] individual to fulfill [her] own unknown destiny" (p. 144). Thus, it is acceptable for us to be passionately engaged in our care for others; however, this care should enable a flight into liberation, not a sentence unto prison, or a confined mobility.

> The passionate responsibility of our being-with-others is not such that it removes the others' concerns for them, but rather, it enables others to be free for their possibilities. Authentic being-with-others in lived-through world-experience is a passionate responsibility that recognizes that nothing separates me from the other, and so, it works to liberate others in the how of their concern. (Anton, 2001, p. 158)

Though, we are passionate about our care for others, we must also be equally passionate about choosing to care for ourselves. As Mary J. Bilge says in her song, "Ain't Really Love," "…a love that tears you down ain't really love … I know I love you, but I love myself too" (Austin, Blige, Childress, & Cox, 2005).

The woman's call from within, her-writer self emerges to set her free. Like the openness of a massive field, the woman's essence has a vastness filled with depth and presence. She is often grounded in her nature to mother—to hold, to nurture, to birth, to harvest. She is a life giver—the holder and giver of life—as well as the receiver of love multiplied through the acts of her birthing, engaging, and being in the world. Yet, as life happened in the past and happens in the present, the dimensional aspects of her connection to self are either lost or changed. She—a woman who barely recognizes herself—feels an inner-nudge, or directional push from within herself to disclose, unveil, reveal, uncover, show herself. The directional is a silent call pushed forth from within; it is her conscience gently and safely calling her back to herself. The call is beckoning her back to a path that leads to herself.

> In the widest sense, "to call" means to set in motion, to get something underway—which may be done in a gentle and therefore unobtrusive manner, and in fact is most readily done that way. …and that the old word

> "to call" means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that therefore the "call" has an assonance of helpfulness and complaisance … . (Heidegger, 1968, p. 117)

The phrase "to call" does not "simply [mean] to give this or that [a] name," or "to command" or "to order," but most importantly to "call into arrival and presence" with the ability to "commend, entrust, give into safekeeping, [and] keep safely" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 118).

Heidegger's refreshing description of "to call" helps to structure an understanding of how an inner-call ignites excitement and serves as an inner-light, or guide, along the path back to herself. Its non-threatening invitation sets into motion the hearing of the desire, making a resolve to move forward with the call of being-one's self. She, the woman, is fascinated with moving and encountering the journey back to herself.

> To the call of conscience there corresponds a possible hearing. Our understanding of the appeal unveils itself *as our wanting to have a conscience* [Gewissenhabenwollen]. But in this phenomenon lies that existentiell choosing which we seek—the choosing to choose a kind of Being-one's-Self which, in accordance with its existential structure, we call "resoluteness." (Heidegger, 1962, p. 314)

It is here, in this space of comfort, where she, the woman, begins to question the possibilities to live beyond the "they" in her life as she answers the call of her conscience to take this journey. In many ways, her journey will be like the land with its multiple textures, countless openings and closures, and richness that embraces the wild. Every inch of her being is supported like a vast piece of land yielding a daily harvest, a daily unearthing. As Heidegger (1962) asserts, "Conscience manifests as the call of care" (p. 322). Similar to our earlier discussion, the conscience of care leaps ahead.

> One must keep in mind that when we designate the conscience as a "call", this call is an appeal to the they-self in its Self; as such an appeal, it summons the Self

> to its potentiality-for-Being-its-Self and thus calls *Dasein* forth to its possibilities. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 319)

Nonetheless, the journeys back to herself and for herself are often intertwined with challenge, desire, and hope. It is the trip where focus and direction become an issue and self-respect becomes a virtue. It is the part of her being that needs and wants a re-alignment, or a means to regroup, to balance her life in the subtleness of the air she breathes, hoping to be set free. It is here in this space where the possibilities of risk take form, naming her a writer—a creator of a creation. Her artwork is not a picture or a portrait, but a poetic rendering placed within the promise of her words to please her soul and nurture her spirit. As Schneider (2003) asserts, "The act of writing is a tremendous adventure into the unknown, always fraught with danger. But the deeper you go and the longer you work at your art, the greater will be your treasure" (p. 5). For it is here, in this deep place, where the woman writer's journey requires a "letting be," but not in the form of isolation. Instead, it is a means to embrace self as self as Heidegger (1961/1993a) describes:

> However, the phrase required now—to let beings be—does not refer to neglect and indifference but rather the opposite. To let be is to engage oneself with beings. On the other hand, to be sure, this is not to be understood only as the mere management, preservation, tending, and planning of the beings in each case encountered or sought out. To let be—that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are—means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself. (p. 125)

It is here, in this space, I believe the philosophical inquirer wonders: What is writing to the woman searching for a return to self? How does creativeness comfort, hold, and challenge her to care for her essence, her authenticity, her being in the world? What is the freeing element of her power to let go and just be in the words of her heart—those

of the past, present, and future?

A woman's sand garden: Hearing King's call, embracing the natural. In 1967, song-writer Carole King and husband-writing partner Gerry Goffin wrote the hit song, "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" specifically for Aretha Franklin. The first stanza of the song begins with a woman discussing how she used to feel "so uninspired" and "so tired" when she "had to face another day." However, the rest of the song leads the listener on a journey of what it means to meet the muse, or "source of inspiration" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 2002, p. 916) that claims our souls and inspires us to live with a "peace of mind"—naming our mood, rejecting doubt, and embracing the feeling of being alive and natural. By the end of the song, the stanzas reveal that the woman unearths her self as a natural woman in the presence of another.

> Oh, baby, what you done to me?
> You make me feel so good inside
> And I just wanna be close to you
> You make me feel so alive
> You make me feel
> You make me feel
> You make me feel like a natural woman
> (Goffin, King, & Wexler, 1967)

Forty-five years after the release of this song, King (2012) writes in her memoir, "I had found the key to success in performing. It was to be authentically myself" (p. 229).

For King, songwriting and performance illuminate by emancipating, embracing, and exuding her creativeness—her plucked, or determined, resolve to exist masterfully and magnificently. It is a mindful acceptance of letting herself be, making a resolve to live from the inside-out. For instance, in a 60-minute interview with reporter Charles Wooley (2012), King speaks to this action of actively, or mindfully, knowing who you

are and doing what you must as a means to manifest herself honestly, authentically, and real.

> CAROLE: When a person is creative, you must write, you must have some of that when you're writing, and the words just flow out of your pen or your computer or whatever. That's what happens when I'm truly present - I get out of the way and all this stuff comes through.
>
> CHARLES WOOLEY: And that is the question, isn't it? If we knew where it came from, we would know how to do it, and there would be no great mystery to writing a great song.
>
> CAROLE: But even if I - I am someone who knows how to do it, and is lucky enough to have it come through.
>
> CHARLES WOOLEY: You know how to build it.
>
> CAROLE: And I can still feel that sense of "[O]oh my God, this is so beautiful. It's coming through me and I'm watching it at the same time, and I'm so moved but I can't sing it."

Like King, many women recognize authenticity as human beings when they are operating, or functioning, closest to the core of their being as individuals with individuals. It is there—here at the innermost core—that she, the woman, is most efficient, eternally exhibiting self-efficacy, confidence, and strength via the language of her body.

> If I want to live my ability to be fully present and compassionate, my ability to be with it all—the joy and the sorrow—I must find the ways, the people, the places, the practices that support me in being all I truly am. …I must find the song lines that run through my life, the melodies that remind me of what I really am and call me gently back to acting on this knowing. (Dreamer, 2001, p. 13)

Yet, this type of exuberance, or liveliness, can only be obtained continuously if she, the woman, allows herself the opportunity daily to: a) accept the call to return to the internal wilderness of one's self with the intention of refocusing and relearning the ways of her distinctive natural; and, b) search for and/or dwell on a pathway that leads to the core of her innermost being with the intention of finding the foundational wellspring within

herself to hydrate and reclaim the deserted, yet purposeful and resourceful areas in her life to accomplish a particular life purpose or goal. With her acceptance and desire to search and/or dwell, the woman makes a courageous decision to know and do as needed to live consciously free.

The call: Knowing who you are and doing what you must. What is it, the writing utensil? Who is she, the woman, praying with a writing utensil external through her hand, while looking, seeing, and watching internally for an understanding or a knowing? Through these types of questions, the lived experience of the women writing for a harvest within themselves is breathing with meaning (van Manen, 1997). As van Manen writes:

> …phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life. (p. 32)

Writing is a process that embraces and yields to the being of our body, mind, and spirit. Each works in accordance with the other to deliver letters that conjure meaning filled with the spirit of one's inner self. This process, though studied, is still a mystery unfolding, disclosing, and un-concealing its nature to transform lives via the discourse of words on matter—paper, chalkboard, sand, etc. It is a sacred dance with self, God, and nature.

Phenomenology Unearths the Dance of Writing

Writing is a dance between alphabetic letters moving in connection with the song of words. It is the fluency of one's mood conjured through the movement of her, the woman writer's creativeness exonerated through the hand. It is the internal relationship between body, mind, and spirit moving in unison left to right externally on paper as a

theatrical chorus line singing and dancing, evoked through the sounding of one's harmonic spirit aligned with her thoughts.

With each letter singing to the beat of her thoughts, the woman's creativeness is aroused through the power of her hand, which forms words spoken from the mood of her spirit embraced by the heart, through the body, and with the mind. It is a telling of truth—her truth—with the understanding that the complexity of living, or maintaining various life roles, may entangle her, the woman, into a pretense of being someone she is not—barring her from the needs or wants of herself. Yet, the moment she chooses to write, she chooses to take a risk to remove the mask of pretense and bring forth her truth. Simultaneously, her passageway opens to the path, which always leads back to the essence of who she is at this moment, in this time. She is a woman-risking—risking death, while aiming for life through her words. As Dreamer (2001) writes:

> *The Dance* is about finding ways to let our essential nature guide our choices and our actions. It's about honesty looking at the times when it is hard for us to remember and be guided by who we really are—the times when we are tired and hurt, frightened and angry. (p. 13)

The risking, the dancing, the writing, allow for the space of freedom, of "letting beings be" (Heidegger, 1927/1993a, p. 125), a space filled with disclosure, un-concealment, authenticity, and care. A woman's words are like a mortal being prying open the lid of the cellar that silenced her as she sat in the darkness of secrets used to control her voice. Yet, the light of inquiry kept calling her name through the words she spoke in the quietness of her heart, writing on the walls of her thoughts, internally wishing to just be free. I believe Heidegger (1927/1993a) summarizes the notion of freedom best when he asserts, "[I]t becomes evident also that freedom is the ground of the inner possibility of correctness only because it receives its own essence from the more

original essence of uniquely essential truth" (pp.124-125).

With a writing utensil in her hand in that moment, she, as a writer, allows the risk to become her passageway—a corridor for her decision to find a connection to the path that always leads back to the essence of her being. At least for some, if not just for one, writing is sowing a seed for a harvest in self. It is a moving flow of the hand's mysteries empowered to speak on paper, in the sand, through the air—giving her, the woman writer, freedom to be, to create, to exist in her own while, too, being in the world with others. It is her hand—the right and/or the left—that allows her to toil with the earthiness of who she is.

In unison with her breathing, the grounding of her hands captures the triangular aspects of her being in mind, body, and spirit. With the mind, her thoughts are formed. With the body, her words and images are formed. With the spirit, her eccentricities, or individualities, are formed. The stillness of her breathing allows her to reach internally for herself and externally through her hands, which opens the pathway to design—the design of letters, words, and picture like images. A poetic experience unfolds. It is what Heidegger (1959/1971b) describes as "projective saying":

> Projective saying is poetry: the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what is. Actual language at any given moment is the happening of this saying, in which a people's world historically arises for it and the earth is preserved as that which remains closed. Projective saying is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world. (p. 74)

The experience brings a point of poetic release, an announcement of her finding truth. It opens a pathway and reveals four ways to reach from within herself as she questions:

1. What is within my reach? Am I able to pause and focus so I may see that which is before me?
2. What is beyond my reach, but reachable? Am I eager to stretch myself a little further to obtain that which belongs me?
3. What is my reach? Am I cognizant of my strengths and weakness not to limit, but to edify (challenge and encourage) myself as I reach?
4. What is beyond my reach, and unreachable? Am I willing to let go that which is beyond my control?

Through the hand, each reach serves the capacity of possibilities while giving voice to her being—her capability to think, to believe, to be. As Heidegger (1968) asserts, "The hand is something altogether peculiar. In the common view, the hand is part of our bodily organism. But the hand's essence can never be determined, or explained, by its being an organ that can grasp" (p.16). With the capabilities of the mind, the hand is a vessel used to create. Artwork is formed. Symbols are designed. Words are fashioned. With movement of the hand(s), the things of our mind are expressed; thoughts are released, interpreted, and realized; considerations are made real.

> Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can handily achieve works of handicraft. …The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others. … Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking. (Heidegger, 1968, p. 16)

As each woman sits and rests with her self, she ponders the four reaches of her hand through her writing while she engages the worlds of the sky, earth, mortality, and divinity. For a brief moment, this space becomes a place for each woman to pause as she reaches to play with language—her language, my language—unearthing her truth, her story, and her self. As Heidegger (1971b) asserts, "All creation, because it is such a drawing-up, is a drawing, as of water from a spring" (p. 76). Is this grounding of her hands the centering that brings forth the stillness of the pause that makes way for the

"drawing-up" of words and images of her heart?

Phenomenology Unearths the Workshop

The pathway to one's life is often through a workshop—a place or space where an individual is determined to commit to being with one's self for a specific or undetermined length of time. The word "workshop" refers to "a relatively short-term, intensive, problem-focused learning experience that actively involves participants in the identification and analysis of problems and in the development and evaluation of solutions" (Sork, 1984, p. 5). However, for this study, workshop refers to the creative work an individual does to unearth her story found deep within her own personal wellspring. It is the occasion in which the mind, body, and spirit embrace the moments of silences washed by tears as each rummages through past and present memories etched in time. It is an openness to play, to perform, to be real in make believe all the while discreetly learning and growing. As Gadamer (1975/2013) writes:

> Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object. The player knows very well what play is, and that what he is doing is "only a game"; but he does not know what exactly he "knows" in knowing that. (p. 107)

From a critical vantage point, the workshop is a space filled with questions—inquiring and searching—challenging the meaning of self for its growth and pruning. From a creative vantage point, the workshop is a space filled with colors—reflecting and projecting—embracing the meaning of self for its healing and stirring. The mindfulness of this experience is steeped within the intertwined modes of life and death; make believe and real; standing and falling. Fortunately, while on the path, in the stillness of her

breathing, she, the female writer, can become one with her eternal existence of being.

The paths are varied and many—some non-existent, some wide, and some narrow; however, the workshop is a living space, which births life through the artwork of a woman's writing. Thus, it is the safe place where through her words she is able to "play" with the question: Am I the "me" I want to be?

The workshop: The wellspring of the writer. A writing workshop is a place and an experience—a safe haven *for* and an active invasive rending *of* self—to create, embrace, and engage. As a place, it provides a space to reveal the unattended blank canvases, forsaken open fields, and dry desolate deserts of our lives—the areas of our inner being left unattended. As an experience, it calls forth the opportunity to release emotion, mood, and expression as the conversion of life and death merge, where, at times, things begun end and things ending lead to new beginnings. It is an explorative walk of hope in the desert—a search for water, the well-springs of our lives, while hoping to hydrate the barren areas as we search the inner cavities of ourselves as friends—close intimate beings and lovers who say "Yes" to our existence, who accept the *anam cara* experience we extend to ourselves.

O'Donohue (2004) defines *anam cara* as "a soul friend" (p. 26). A soul friend is the person with whom we share ourselves uninhibited. In this experience, there is love and an understanding that allows both persons to be themselves—no pretense, no masks, no lies. The soul friend is "the truest mirror to reflect your soul" (O'Donohue, 2004, p. 26). It is a journey of love to self for self with others. We have to accept and love ourselves to experience the depths of this true friendship or intimate connection with others. As O'Donohue (2004) writes:

> You can never love another person unless you are equally involved in the beautiful but difficult spiritual work of learning to love yourself. There is within each of us, at the soul level, an enriching fountain of love. (p. 26)

It is a found wellspring, an already existing "original and bountiful source of something" ("Wellspring," n.d) within each of us, the human-being. A found wellspring is a voice awakened from the barrenness desert of inner thoughts. It is an acceptance of self first in the quiet of the written words, then, aloud when spoken as a sign of ownership and freedom. It is the words of a workshop participant reading aloud from her paper as sounds in the air hug the invisible force of the wind that speaks audibly her truth once hidden, never told, and maybe lost in time. It is a voicing/articulation/saying of her inner thoughts written on paper now released and caught by the listening ear. The struggle is no longer with the experience once lived. Her audible voice paints a picture owned and signed by herself. In some ways, as Heidegger (1971/1993c) explains, "The saying is a gathering that joins every shining of showing. The showing, for its part, is multiple; everywhere it lets what is shown stand on its own" (p. 414).

In the atmosphere of where a woman workshops herself, she must accept the call to love herself no matter the challenge or obstacles she will face or name during her experience as a participant. As O'Donohue (2004) describes in the quote below, she must come to understand the importance of her inner whisper, accepting the flow of love within herself for herself (which eventually includes accepting the flow of love within herself for others).

> In other words, you do not have to go outside yourself to know what love is. This is not selfishness, and it is not narcissism; they are the negative obsessions with the need to be loved. Rather this is the wellspring of love within the heart. Through their need for love, people who lead solitary lives often stumble upon this great fountain. They learn to whisper awake the deep well of love within. This is not a question of forcing yourself to love yourself. It is more a question of

> exercising reserve, of inviting the wellspring of love that is, after all, your deepest nature to flow through your life. (pp. 26-27)

Taking this time to pause is a constructive expression of choosing to love and cherish self. Therefore, with this understanding of pause, the role of the facilitator is to guide the workshop with a level of care. She, the facilitator, listens to each Being and embraces the personal qualities of each participant, nurturing an environment that calls forth an embracing of self and an overflowing of the inner wellspring.

> In listening to others, accepting them in their irreducible difference, we help them to listen to themselves, to heed the speech of their own body of experience, and to become, each one, the human being he or she most deeply wants to be. (Levin, 1989, p. 88)

As facilitators, our practice of pedagogy, or way in which we lead the workshop, is key to the participation and development of its participants.

The workshop: A garden for the conversation. Casey (2009) writes that he has been "concentrating on gardens mainly because of their capacity to exhibit a range of relations between the naturally given and the intentionally cultivated" (p. 168). In chapters one and two, it is obvious that I am smitten by gardens. Like Casey, I, too, find the beauty in the interrelatedness of the nature and the nurture of beings and things. As a facilitator, this capacity of recognizing and acknowledging the naturally given (nature) and intentionally cultivated (nurture) are key factors in facilitating an effective workshop. It allows for a foundation that encourages participants to accept and recognize who they are innately with an anticipation of self-growth in the moments to come.

Within this type of place, workshop participants are drawn toward an acceptance for the now and a possibility for the future. This focus brings us, as workshop facilitators, to another aspect of caring and nurturing—recognizing certain elements that expose

themselves within the space of a given place. For instance, as an example, I revisit the three special lessons Casey (2009) suggests the garden offers:

1. Gardens embody an unusually intimate connection between mood and built place. ...in gardens[,] mood is an intrinsic feature, something that belongs to our experience of them. (p. 168)
2. Beyond their mood-specific aspects, gardens instruct us as to the expanded building potential of certain material elements. Those who build gardens work with (and within) the inherent media of the natural world. (p. 169)
3. Perhaps most important of all, as built places, gardens offer dwelling of some sort. We may pause while perambulating a garden, but we do not stay on for the night. (p. 169)

In a sense, the lessons of gardens are reminders that mood, potential, and dwelling within a place are essential to the effectiveness of a workshop. The first lesson is a reminder that individuals may attend with an expectation to feel a certain way based on their past experiences; and, too, the present experience can shape a future experience or decision to encounter another workshop experience—or not. The mood, or temperament, of the place can inspire positive and/or negative emotions to arise within the participants and/or self. The second lesson is a reminder that individuals may workshop themselves within certain measures; our human capabilities and boundaries are the edges that guide and direct us though a particular situation or condition in our lives; our potential to grow may not be defined by limitations, but where we mark the edge, or the place we refuse to visit. The third lesson is a reminder that the place of the workshop may offer a temporary, yet special place for the participant to pause before moving on to another place or back to the place from which she came.

For the most part, nature has an incredible existence and capability of modeling life for us humans. Each lesson of the garden reminds us that nature and nurture may work in tandem. At times, the modeling is inconceivable or mind-blowing. Though

nature does not have the ability to speak orally, she does have an audible, or clear and distinct, voice, which engages others and me. As I care for her, embrace her beauty, and spend time in her presence, I hear her voice. This contemplative exercise of being in the presence of nature and listening to her opens a clearness of thought and inspires an array of creative and critical thinking; it sparks a need to action—a need to converse toward understanding. Thus, for this study, the workshop will be created to offer the essence of a garden, providing an intimate connection between mood and built place (and/or any of the other two lessons) to support the ability to have one or more conversations for understanding if so desired, or just to rest in community lived out, as Gadamer (1975/2013) writes:

> … language has its true being only in dialogue, in coming to an understanding. … Coming to an understanding as such, rather, does not need any tools, in the proper sense of the word. It is a life process in which a community of life is lived out. … All kinds of human community are kinds of linguistic community: even more, they form language. For language is by nature the language of conversation; it fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding. That is why it is not a mere means in the process. (p. 463)

Amazingly, it is in these sacred gardens of women coming together to write and share/to read and listen/to talk and understand that life-writing libraries are built and used as dwelling spaces.

Life-Writing builds her,
the woman shifting old dirt,
talking up her rose.
(S. Riley, Life Writing, 2014)

According to Heidegger (1962), "All research—and not least that which operates within the range of the central question of Being—is an ontic possibility of *Dasein*" (p. 41). Therefore, this research is no different. As the workshop participants participate in

creative journaling writing activities, aspects of the woman's Being will be present. Her presence will not be in the past or in the present, but in both.

> In its factual Being *Dasein* always is as and "what" it already was. Whether explicitly or not, it *is* its past. It is its own past not only in such a way that its past, as it were, pushes itself along "behind" it, and that it possesses what is past as a property that is still at hand and occasionally has an effect on it. *Dasein* "is" its past in the manner of *its* Being which, roughly expressed, actually "occurs" out of its future. In its manner of being at any given time, and accordingly also with the understanding of Being that belongs to it, *Dasein* grows into a customary interpretation of itself and grows up in that interpretation. (Heidegger, 1962/1993b, p. 63)

This attentiveness to Being will allow for in-depth introspection of self via the contemplative practices, like the journaling explained in chapter two, and various types of poetry such as Haiku. The participants' "reflective accounts of human experiences are of phenomenological value" (van Manen, 1997, p. 73) for this study. The creative journal writing experiences will provide lifeworld writings, or text from which to draw and uncover essential themes.

Phenomenology Unearths the Poetic

Like literature and other story forms, van Manen (1997) shares, "The essential use of poetry in phenomenological research to serve as a fountain of experiences" (p. 70), increasing real-world understandings, or "practical insights" (p. 70) of phenomenologists. He states, "Poetry too is a literary form that transforms lived experience into poetic language, the poetic language of verse" (p. 70).

Philosophically, poetry dwells in the spaces of integrity, timelessness, and truth. It calls forth an awakening—a revival of the spirit-meeting-the-mind-meeting-the-body. The meetings call forth the poem—the incarnation of language rising from the depths of the voicelessness to speak an unspoken word orally, spiritually, or physically. The poem

conjures new life through each breath of reality, connecting the features of each Being seeking to be free. Poetically, the poem embraces the royal hem of poetry accepting the burden, or responsibility of care, to feed the masses aesthetically—encouraging a being of trueness. As van Manen shares, "A poet can sometimes give a linguistic expression to some aspect of human experience that cannot be paraphrased without losing a sense of the vivid truthfulness that the lines of the poem are somehow about to communicate" (p. 71). In some ways, the human experience becomes a muse for creative thought.

A Poet

Who is a poet?
Is it not me, the woman—
lyrically free?
(S. Riley, 2014)

Critchley (2004) asserts, "Poetry is life with the ray of imagination's power passing through it" (p.186). His words, similar to van Manen (1997), remind us that poetry is an expression of the lived experience. It is the use of word images stating the obvious with a concise, sometime colorful, all-encompassing stroke of the hand or piercing utterance of the tongue moving us forward into our authentic selves. Each verse provides the truth of a lived experience poetically.

> The poetic act, the act of the mind, illumines the surface of things with imagination's beam. This act is part of the thing and not about it. Through it, we detect what we might *call the movement of self* in those things: plate, bread, wine, water, rock, tree, moon. In poetry, the makings of things are makings of the self. Poets are the chanting-heart artificers of the world in which they sing, and, singing make. (Critchley, 2004, p. 186)

The artifact is the lived experience philosophically, or thoughtfully, spoken with a poetic, or creative, ambiance. Both poetry and philosophy are vessels of truth with particular characteristics for assisting individuals with moving forward in their lives authentically.

Though, in comparison, poetry is the "founding of truth" (Heidegger, 1971b, p.75); whereas, philosophy is "the science of truth" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 256). Over the years, with aging, I have come to recognize that life offers us gems along the way. These two gems—poetry and philosophy—help us navigate through our feelings of hope and doubt. In the space of accessing and establishing truth (founding) and in the skill of functioning within truth (science), poetry and philosophy reveal and uncover some of life's mysteries. As Critchley (2004) suggests, "Poetry takes the place of religion as that medium which offers the possibility, or at least pursues the question of life's redemption" (p. 185) where as "philosophy is atheism, but an anxious atheism, restlessness with a religious memory and with a religious archive" (p. 185). In a sense, it is the divine and the secular providing a space, or an opening, for the truth to unfold, disclose, and engage. Our truth may entail a heavenly- and/or earthly-minded understanding of the reality concerning our being as humans in the world.

Interestingly enough, both poetry and philosophy require the active process of thinking. The writings of poetry and philosophy are often intensely grounded in the truths of the lifeworld in which we live, preserving the essence of life. Yet, the interpretation of either one is often messy. Both type of writers compose from the perspective of themselves—the originator of thought, the founder and artisan of truth (Bachelard, 1969; Britton et al., 1975). Thus, for the listener or reader, the mystery in the poetry and philosophy remains slightly unknown. Neither a poet nor a philosopher can be fully understood in his or her own terms (Gadamer, 1975/2013; Heidegger, 1968). As Heidegger (1968) asserts, "That is impossible, because no thinker—and no poet—understands himself. How then could anybody else dare claim to understand a thinker—

even to understand him better?" (p. 185).

In thinking about Heidegger's assertion, I embrace the thought of knowing that in some circumstances of teaching and learning, the unearthing of things—such as life situations or life stories—though clear, understandable language may not be understood or translated in my mind, in a way that I appreciate the gist of what was written or read aloud. However, in that moment, I must remember that "The poet speaks on the threshold of being" (Bachelard, 1969, p. xvi)—not my or anyone else's being, but her own being. If she is writing poetry—or if she is thinking—she is immersed in the poetics of life. She is using language to create a lyrical stance of herself.

For the most part, language is "the house of Being" (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 135), the place in which we are able to create ourselves as we contemplate our lives and project ourselves to others. With the combination of communal writing and creative journaling activities, we can assist in building a community of truth—a community that upholds the hallmark that "Reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it" (Palmer, 1998, p. 95). For the most part, the way in which the practitioner engages with her students must begin with care, a leap forth type of caring, to develop the type of poetic, collaborative learning experience needed to ignite the motivation of a deep yearning for being with others as Self.

Phenomenology Unearths Contemplative Practices

Van Manen (1997) asserts two statements about phenomenological research that aligns well with the contemplative creative journal writing practices of this study:

1. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is fundamentality a writing activity where research and writing are aspects of one process (p. 7); and,
2. Phenomenological research is a search for what it means to be human. (p. 12)

The first statement underscores the basic ability of a writing activity to accomplish two thoughtful tasks—exploration and expression—in one course of action. The second statement underscores the quest to answer the question of Who am I? as an individual human in the world with other humans. From a pedagogic perspective, both statements endorse "the activity of teaching that requires constant practical action in concrete situations and relations" (van Manen, p. 2). Researching, writing, and searching are each spun from thoughtfulness and a continued course of action driven by specific personal and/or impersonal interests and experiences. The focus is the participant, the person engaged in learning about self through the remembrance and/or forward thinking of particular interests and experiences; and, the contemplative practices of each can place the participant at the center of her own learning, shifting the balance of power from facilitator (teacher) to participant (learner) in a meaningful and engaged manner (Barbezat & Bush, 2013).

For instance, contemplative correspondence, or writing, combines "spiritual practices and writing methods with the intention of sacred connection, spiritual growth, and creative flow" (Hering, 2013, p. xx). Each of these practical actions allows a participant—who actively workshops herself—to engage in a thoughtful exploration of examining (researching), expressing (writing), and looking for (searching) herself in solitude or in relation to others as a means to embrace and understand herself fully. Therefore, the facilitator of a creative journaling pause allows time within the creative journaling experience for her participants to study themselves attentively as they engage in the process of expressing themselves. This element is definitely imperative to the success of a creative journaling pause experience.

Phenomenology unearths Haiku

The structure of Haiku poetry affects the way in which the creator/artist/poet speaks her truth through words. If associated with the seasons as guided by tradition or free and weather-less as guided by today's "let be," the words and imagery of the woman writer is still constrained to the structure of the syllables—five, seven, five; the first, second, and third lines of its existence, an invisible pathway of numbers and counting. This constraining is not to limit her creativity, but to liberate it. It is her method to mindfulness, an acknowledgement of being present. It is her way of resurfacing and projecting herself to the beat, or timing, of her own internal drum externally.

Protected by the walls of an invisible pathway of mathematical existence, she is allowed to rest in the mindfulness of format as truth externally appears. Five. Seven. Five. She silently counts within herself. Each moment allows a journey toward the birthing of language whereas Heidegger (1959/1971b) writes, "[The] saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*" (p. 73).

The journey lets her form the words that name a particular truth. A poem is developed as she releases the name of its being not merely as a feeling or the beauty of connecting letters to form words, but as a surrendering, a rejection or "renunciation of all the dim confusion in which a being veils and withdraws itself" (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 74). For instance the poem, "Her Body Loved," is a nudge to love one's body regardless of shape or size—removing the veil that perpetuates only a certain type of body deserves love. In essence, the body is here; love it as it is. If change is needed, move toward it in a mindful, or present, state of love.

Her Body Loved

My body is here
Waiting for me to love it
Like the budding rose
(S. Riley, 2014)

Phenomenology Unearths Moving Forward In Our Writing

Through the lived experience, we (as little girls) learned how to cope and deal with life during "practice sessions," or the life molding events and occasions, that now define who we are as adults. Unless a woman takes the time to engage her inner dialogue, she may never encounter and/or embrace her own true essence as a female who loves herself and who is capable of loving others.

Although we may each experience an event evoking similar remembrances, each of our personal life-writing libraries will have different volumes representing particular earmarked events from our youthful and mature years. It is true: Our stories are not without their own merit and reason for existing; and, yet, each story gives to the collective making of life's meaning that we, humans, physically pass through this world with our various emotional landmarks defining or honing who we are as individuals.

Phenomenology: Methodological Structure and Its Activities

In studying a lived experience that involves the unearthing of poetry, it is essential that the research methodology, or "the philosophic framework," and its methods, or the "way the study will be conducted" (van Manen, 1997, p. 28) align with the nature of the research question. As discussed previously, poetry, in itself, leads to an opening; therefore, the methodology and its methods should also lead to a type of clearing and disclosing. Thus, the use of phenomenology, a methodology known for its "systematic

attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. 10) is appropriate.

As a guide to the phenomenological research practice, I use the six research activities van Manen (1997) offers as the methodological structure for discovering, or "finding out what a certain phenomenon means and how it is experienced" (p. 29). The six activities are:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interest us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

Turning to a Phenomenon That Seriously Interest Us And Commits Us To The World

For the first activity, van Manen (1997) indicates, "Every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern" (p. 31). It is a thoughtful practice where I am, as the researcher, committed to thinking deeply about a single thought. This practice highlights phenomenological research as "a being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a researcher, a theorist" (p. 31). With the turning, I am re-entering my personal sand gardens.

As discussed in chapter one, I am aware that my multi-tasking as a woman can hinder my ability to operate as my authentic self—if not cautious of how I approach the way I care for others and/or myself. Yet, also, I am aware of the significance writing has on being mindful and authentic as a woman, a writer, and a poet. With this awareness, I am deeply interested in studying the phenomenon of writing, transformative in nature, as

a lived experience in a setting for learning about self—such as a workshop, seminar, circle of women, or in one's room alone. I am committed to the deep question concerning the process of writing, like creative journaling, as a mindful practice, to transform lives and connect us to the divine, the earth, others, and/or ourselves.

> This starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you or me and of identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e., as some experience that human beings live through. The nature and number of possible human experiences are varied and infinite as human life itself. (van Manen, 1997, p. 40)

This identification of my deep and abiding interests centers me in the phenomenological question for this study: **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journal pause?** As a singular focus, the question will guide me in this research. However, even with a single focus, I must acknowledge I am entering this inquiry with my own "assumptions" and "pre-understandings" about the phenomenon (van Manen, p. 46).

As I previously noted, this practice of journaling and unearthing poetry is a part of my process to unearth who I am. Therefore, as a phenomenologist, or phenomenological researcher, I must practice "bracketing" (van Manen, 1997, p. 47), a process in which I, as the researcher, explore the phenomenon outside of my own knowledge of it. It is essential that I allow the phenomenon to show itself (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1997) without inflicting my opinions, biases, and experiences of it.

Investigating Experience As We Live It Rather Than As We Conceptualize It

For the second activity, van Manen (1997) indicates that "phenomenological research aims at establishing a renewed contact with original experience" (p. 31). It is

when I, the researcher, become "full of the world, full of lived experience" (van Manen, p. 32) as I enter and stand in the personal sand gardens of others and explore it.

> The lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research. …and, so, we need to search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material that, upon reflective examination, might yield something of a fundamental nature. (p. 53)

This activity involves various approaches to gathering or collecting lived experience material of different forms, starting with the researcher's personal "lived-experience description—data, or material on which to work" (p. 55). For this study, chapter two included the lived experiences of individuals who have also used a creative journaling pause as a means to center themselves. Their stories, which are similar to my own, assist me with reflecting on my own experiences, but also with unearthing descriptions of the phenomenon. As phenomenological descriptions are unearthed, the universal character of the phenomenon is shown.

This orientation, or universal character, may assist in energizing the conversation with others about the phenomenon. It is our conversations with others that provide us with opportunities to borrow other people's experiences and reflections of their experiences (van Manen, 1997). Hence, the purpose of borrowing is "to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience" (van Manen, p. 62). Yet, even with the various gathering approaches, van Manen (1991) reminds us "the experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions—whether caught in oral or in written discourse—are never identical to lived experience itself" (p. 54). Our recollections and reflections are transformations of those experiences (van Manen, 1997). The now of the experience has passed, yet the nature of the phenomenon remains; the meaning of the experience lives.

For this study, the gathering approach will be (a) conversation-interviewing—the gathering of the personal life story; (b) observing—the collecting of experiential anecdotes via the method of close observation and entering the lifeworld of the person's experience; (c) the personal writings—the collection of writings and drawings of each participant through written accounts (reflective writings and the creative journal).

Reflecting on the Essential Themes Which Characterize the Phenomenon

For the third activity, van Manen (1997) indicates that "phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of every day life" (p. 32). It is the merging of personal sand gardens—others and mine—to unearth the special significance of the lived experience. It is the point in the research when three intentional things happen: (a) the words of philosophers are borrowed and infused into a discussion of the phenomenon; (b) the lived-experience descriptions are thoughtfully studied; and, (c) phenomenological themes are unearthed, presenting or showing the meaning or essence of a phenomenon.

As a poet-educator-researcher, I am drawn to the fact that phenomenology, as a human science research, is concerned with meaning (van Manen, 1997). I am drawn by van Manen's assertion that "Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of themes we can navigate and explore such universes" (p. 90). This assertion provides a metaphoric way of revealing themes as powerful influences that assist with making sense of the phenomenon. As a light, each theme allows for an opening to develop meaningful phenomenological descriptions.

Van Manen (1997) discusses three reading approaches phenomenologists commonly use to guide them "by the light of themes." In particular, the themes may be uncovered (or unearthed) and isolated by using the following reading approaches: (a) the wholistic [sic] or sententious approach; (b) the selective reading or highlighting approach; and, (c) the detailed or line-by-line approach (van Manen, 1997). With each approach, the researcher is engaging with the text. For instance, the wholistic reading approach reviews the text as a whole to get an overall meaning of a phenomenon; the highlighting reading approach reviews the text to select any phrases that stand out and capture the significance of a phenomenon; and, the detailed reading approach reviews the text line-by-line to unearth the nature of a phenomenon (van Manen, 1997).

Choose an Approach	Ask the Question	Uncover the theme(s)
Wholistic [sic] or Sententious	What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?	Formulate a phrase that expresses the meaning of the text as a whole concerning the creative journaling pause phenomenon
Selective or Highlighting	What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?	Specify the statements that seem essential and revealing about the creative journaling pause phenomenon with a circle, underline, or highlight.
Detailed or Line-by-Line	What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?	Review each sentence or sentence cluster to uncover what is revealed about the nature of the creative journaling pause phenomenon

Figure 1. Three approaches to uncover themes (based on van Manen's (1997) discussion (p. 93)).

Each approach asks a question (or questions) to guide the process of uncovering thematic statements from various lived experience descriptions found in conversations, daily accounts or stories, journals, written responses, poetry, film, and novels. With the approaches, phenomenologists aim to unearth and recognize the commonality or possible commonalities of recurring themes despite the variations of richness in the descriptions.

For me, a visual learner who often needs visual aids or remainders to stay in-tune with an activity, I developed the chart above to assist me with unearthing themes about a creative journaling pause based on van Manen's discussion of how a phenomenologist generally uncovers or isolates "thematic aspects of a phenomenon in some text" (p. 92). For this study, I used the reading approach(es) that best allowed me to explicate "the themes while staying true to the universal quality or essence" (van Manen, 1997, p. 97) of the creative journaling phenomenon. This is not a coding process, but rather an engagement process with the text.

Describing the Phenomenon Through the Art of Writing and Rewriting

For the fourth activity, van Manen (1997) states that "in phenomenological human science, writing does not merely enter the research process as a final step or stage" (p. 111). The process of writing—prewriting, writing, reviewing, and rewriting—is actively and intricately intertwined in the research of the phenomenon. As phenomenologists, we research-and-write and write-and-research, allowing the phenomenon to show itself via language. We understand that the object of this type of research is to create a phenomenological text (van Manen, 1997), which requires a commitment to writing throughout the process of study.

Gadamer (1975/2013) asserts, "Understanding occurs in interpreting" (p. 407). Through writing, we allow ourselves to learn what we know—giving appearance and body to thought (van Manen, 1997). As a phenomenologist and writer-poet, I appreciate that "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs" (Gadamer, 1975/2013, p. 407). With phenomenological writing, the focus is situated in the thoughtful process of unearthing the phenomenon. It requires that I allow the natural

movement of going back and forth between the various levels of questioning a phenomenon (van Manen, 1997). In this case, I am questioning the creative journaling pause with the expectation of creating a phenomenological description that reveals its nature.

Sometimes, I want to say more to ensure the phenomenon is being seen through my words. Yet, in using the words of Gadamer (1975/2013), the phenomenological-writer-in-me knows that "writing is central to the hermeneutical phenomenon insofar as its detachment both from the writer or author and from a specifically addressed recipient or reader gives it a life of its own" (p. 410). It requires a constant state of mindfulness, where I allow myself to embrace silence and "leave things unsaid" to avoid "overwriting" (van Manen, 1997, p. 113). This state of mindfulness helps me stay true to the notion that phenomenology is the methodological use of language and thoughtfulness to reveal a phenomenon, or "an aspect of lived experience, to what shows itself precisely as it shows itself" (van Manen, 1997, p. 32). Therefore, as I write, I must remain sensitive to allowing things to speak for themselves throughout the process of this study.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon

For the fifth activity, van Manen (1997) reminds us that "Phenomenological human science is a form of qualitative research that is extraordinarily demanding of its practitioners" (p. 33). However, the anchor is our orientation—such as our concerns as an educator and/or phenomenologist—which keep us focused on the purpose of researching the lived experience of a particular phenomenon and actively engaged with the practice of phenomenology.

With three statements, van Manen (1997) defines "Human science as critically

oriented action research":

1. Human science is concerned with action in that hermeneutic phenomenological reflection deepens thought and therefore radicalizes thinking and the acting that flows from it.
2. Phenomenology is a philosophy of action especially in a pedagogic context.
3. Phenomenology is a philosophy of action always in a personal and situated sense. (p. 154)

With each statement, the underpinning is action. As human science researchers, but more importantly as humans, one of the most important actions is for us "to be"—to be engaged, to be caring, to be thoughtful, to be present and to be sincere—as we study, live, and experience the world with others. As an educator and poet, my research aligns with the need to create a body of knowledge that edifies, enlightens, and facilitates growth.

In focusing on the pedagogic context, I want to highlight van Manen's (1997) assertion, "Pedagogy itself is a mode of life that always and by definition deals with practical action" (p. 154). For me, this thought expresses the act of respect and love as individuals engage with each other in teaching-learning situations. It is where continuous opportunities of learning, grounded in care ignite a continuous motivation to live as one's authentic self. As an educator, a teacher, a facilitator of knowledge, my actions must inspire individuals to live, to learn, to be within each moment of time as themselves.

> Pedagogy is ultimately a practical affair. …Pedagogy is found not in observational categories, but like love or friendship in the experience of its presence—that is, in concrete, real-life situations. (van Manen, 1991, p. 31)

For the most part, as an adult educator, I refer to pedagogy as the way in which I teach, not necessarily referring to my teaching relationship with children. I do, however, recognize there are differences in teaching children and adults. Yet, the differences do not exclude care from teaching to the whole person. The guiding challenge, in either case, is developing authentic, practical, and transformative learning experiences that address

various principles and strategies for successful lifelong learning (Knowles, 1984; Meizrow, 1990).

As a teacher who facilitates learning, it is imperative that each of my students, either adult or child, experience growth. As an educational researcher, my research should "be guided by pedagogical standards" and the understanding that "the type of reflection required in the act of hermeneutic phenomenological writing on the meanings and significances of phenomena of daily life is fundamental to pedagogic research" (p. 4). I want my research to have didactic qualities that not only enrich the lives of the participants in my research focus and the readers of my research, but also myself. For the most part, this study continues my journey of thinking through the writing process to assist students, in particular women, to incorporate mindfulness into their daily lives through such practices as creative journaling pauses.

Balancing The Research Context By Considering Parts And Whole

For the sixth activity, van Manen (1997) underscores that "qualitative research (*quails* means "whatness") ask the *ti estin* question: What is it?" (p. 33). The purpose of this emphasis is to remind us, as researchers, not to get so involved with the "*ti estin* question" that we "fail to arrive at the clearings that give the text its revealing power" (p. 33). It is imperative to take a "step back" from our research from time to time and look at the contextual truths, reviewing how each part contributes toward the whole (van Manen, 1997).

This action of "stepping back" as a researcher is reminiscent of an individual who is taking time out of her daily life to partake in creative journaling pauses. Her words and images become her daily support, her daily dose of wisdom, knowledge, and

understanding, to sustain the various parts of who she is as a whole. At times, as she becomes entangled in the "whatness" of her life, she partakes in creative journaling to "step back" or to temporarily withdraw from the mundane issues that are mounted high with threats of burying her alive. The creative journaling practice allows her to envision the whole of her life while she is contemplating a part. She is able to use this time to look and travel beyond the horizon and experience a powerful revealing of self. Like the research of phenomenology, this practice affects her well being, causing a deep learning that leads to some sort of transformation. Every creative journaling pause becomes an experience of working the text, engaged in the thoughtful process of writing in words and images. The journal, her sand garden, is comprised of lived experiences that unfold into the phenomenological description of her self. Each part of her life is carved out of the whole of who she is as she asks the question, Who am I?

Entering the Creative Journal Pause, Building A Sand Castle: Method for Engagement

> Writing is a healing and creative journey back to the mystery and power of our words as instruments of creation that came latent within us at birth. It is a path with a heart. (Nelson, 2004, p. xvi)

> A daily record begins on the surface, where our lives are lived. The everyday events matter… . The details of our personal map provide a topography highlighting the defining characteristics of the region we call home. The surface relief of hills and valleys, mountains and lakes, gives us clues about where there might be something of value to be mined below the surface, in the earth's darkness. Our journals can function as a sort of divining rod, pointing with surprising, forked words to a reservoir of hidden water or a vein of gold in our lives. (Cepero, 2008, p. 56)

For this research project, my abiding concern is: **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?** As I journeyed to answer this question, I sent a letter of invitation via email to women from my personal contacts,

asking them to travel with me on this quest (see Appendix A for Letter of Invitation). More often than not, each of the women who received an invitation (a) identifies as a woman of faith; (b) assists and encourages others; and, (c) has at one time or another mentioned writing as a technique to create an expression of self, which defines and/or reveals herself as an individual. She is also a woman who multi-tasks. Though I am connected to each woman, the women may not know each other personally. The following section outlines the participant selection and how each woman engaged in the study.

Participant Selection

Seventeen women were orally asked if they would like to participate in a dissertation study that involved creative journaling. Nine of the seventeen women responded yes to receive an electronic invitation with details about the study, providing and/or confirming their email address. Based on the following criteria and scheduling ability, six women accepted the invitation to participate in this study. The following is the selection criteria used to choose each participant: (a) at least 21 years of age; (b) female; (c) a writer; (d) interested in pausing to participate in various creative journaling activities alone (with herself) and in community (with others); and, (e) a Christian willing to use biblical Scripture to prompt a natural or scripted pause.

Within this study, each participant engaged in conversations about her lived experiences of pausing to write and draw herself while in the company of herself and/or other women similar to herself. The element of diversity within the group came from the individual stories of self.

The Women

> Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. …She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. …She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:10, 13-20, 27-31, KJV)

The woman of Proverbs 31 is diligent in the roles she plays in her life-story. Within certain communities of faith, she is the woman held often as the benchmark for a successful, or fruitful and effective, womanhood. She is an attentive, caring, and hard-working woman who I, too, appreciate and accept. Yet, even with her advance stature, I am sure she rested—taking a break from the unyielding demands of her life's path, primarily because of her fear or devotion to the Lord. The Sabbath, or a day of rest, has always been precious to God's people. The six women in my study are no different. In fact, each of them accepted the invitation knowing it would give them time to rest in a space with themselves, but more importantly hoping to rest in a space with God as they all knew, I, too, am a woman of faith.

Like the woman in Proverbs 31, each woman of this study is highly regarded because of the roles she plays in her own life and in the life of others. Each is a woman of faith who has a reverence for God. They not only work outside of the home, but also within the home caring for family members, while also sharing and spending time with extended family members and friends. In their own individual life stories, the willful work of their hands yields fruitful results—business owner, physician, director, caregiver,

academician, and community advocate. They were a collective, the six women I call "The Garden Tenders." This section introduces the women based on the information shared.

As a group, they are Christian, Black, family-oriented, creative, and multi-taskers who are appreciative of our need to write not only for ourselves, but also for others. Their ages fall within four categories—mid-30s, late 40s, mid-50s, and mid-60s. They were all labeled as daughters and sisters. Some were mothers, godmothers, and aunties. One is a grandmother; two are married; and, four are unmarried. Five chose a pseudonym for a name; one did not. Together, they defined womanhood as a gift from above, God's image, God's purpose, manager, nurturer, helpmate, mother, smart, beautiful, fearless, womb, wise, lover, caregiver, virtuous, comforter, wife, homemaker, sister, friend, strong, leader, hard worker, and crown. Yet, even within the named variances, the women—**Belle, Dianne, Marsha, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower**—are all the same in this aspect: Each participant is a woman creative journaling to move forward in her individual life. They entered their gardens—the group and individual creative journaling circles—to tend to their individual selves, for themselves and for others. The following paragraphs describe the women as I have come to know them.

Belle is a single business owner. She was within the one-year anniversary of her father's death. Exhibiting characteristics of a loving and caring daughter, Belle looked forwarded to her father's phone calls; he looked forward to hers. The two of them—she and her dad—had a special father-daughter relationship that spanned her lifetime, from childhood to adult. Through creative journaling, Belle find a way to honor his life and the life of others through Instagram.

Dianne lives in the family home of her childhood. It is the dwelling place she shares with other family members—the beloved home she returned to after graduate school. Unfortunately, like most shared spaces, she does not have a specific area to claim as her own. Through creative journaling, Diane finds her own.

Marsha is a single, professional woman with a strong attentiveness to the responsibilities in her life. Between work, faith community, and family obligations, the ability to take a break of any kind does not happen for her without a considerable amount of thought and effort. Through creative journaling, Marsha finds the ability to rest with and for herself.

Orchid is a wife and a mother of one. Communion with God through prayer is a common thread in her journaling practices. Her practices extend beyond her personal life to her work as an instructor and director. Through creative journaling, Orchid finds the words and way to commune with God.

Sharron is a single, professional woman who became the legal guardian of one of her grandchildren. As a loving and caring grandmother, Sharron was involved in the daily activities of her grandchild's life so much so that she struggled to prioritize herself, not to the detriment of the grandchild, but to provide short, temporary moments of replenishment for herself. Through creative journaling, Sharron finds a moment "just for me" as she says.

Sunflower is a married, professional woman, who often prioritizes work and home above her own personal needs. As an immigrant, now citizen, Sunflower came to the United States as a student at the age 18 or 19. She immersed herself into a different culture and significantly recreated herself. At the time of the study, she had just gotten to

a place where she knew who she was again. However, she was anxious that she would once again make a decision that would throw her completely off course. Through creative journaling, Sunflower finds the medium to just be herself.

In chapter four, you will come to know the six women—**Belle, Dianne, Marsha, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower**—through the conversations that helped me to develop and explore themes to understand the lived experience of a creative journaling pause.

Entering Gatherings For a Creative Journaling Pause Conversation

The women gathered four times—two times in group sessions and two times individually in one-to-one sessions. The gatherings were in locations conducive to creative journaling and private open-ended conversations, in particular each others' homes and a private community room. The gatherings were scheduled as a group and individually, respectively.

In the first gathering, I gave participants the following: 1) an overview of the research, an oral reading and review of the Consent Form (See Appendix B) for signing and submission, 2) a chance to review the materials of the study, schedule times for group gatherings (one and four) and ask questions; 3) an opportunity to practice *lectio divina* and summarizing their experiences in writing (via haiku, short summary, or some form of a brief description); and, 4) a chance to engage in a discussion about the phenomenon. Each participant received the following materials: a bookmark with the poem *Footprints;* a poem—*Stations* (Lorde, 1986); the book *The Creative Journal: The Art of Finding Yourself* (Capacchione, 2015); a Bienfang Mixed Media creative journal; and, a copy of three chapters from the Bible—Genesis 1, Genesis 2, and John 8. I

provided the creative journaling supplies for writing, drawing, coloring, and painting during each gathering.

During each gathering, the women participated in *lectio divina* and a creative journaling pause experience, reflected on her experiences of the pauses through written prompts provided in chapter three (Capacchione, 2015), wrote a brief description of her experience and engaged in open/ended group conversation with the researcher and other participants or had one-to-one conversations with the researcher about the phenomenon. The first and fourth gatherings were group retreats; and, the fourth gathering included a participant presentation. The second and third gatherings were individual retreats.

The topic and activities for the first gathering assisted each woman with expressing who she is today and who she wants to become (or dream of becoming) tomorrow. The participants expounded on the statement "The woman I am" with a coming to the table activity (see Appendices O-Q) as well defined the term woman/womanhood. The topics for the last three gatherings focused on chapter three from *The Creative Journal*—Who You Are. This chapter engages the woman in creative journaling activities that allows her to examine her self-image and identity with a fresh look, taking notice of the whole person she authentically represents (Capacchione, 2015). The nine subtopics were used to usher the women into a creative journaling pause within each retreat—**Gathering II**: Self-Portrait (p. 40), What's In A Name? (p. 48), Who Am I? (p. 50) and, **Gathering III**: I Believe, Part I (p. 52), I Believe, Part II (p. 53), Self-Inventory (p. 54); My Creative Self (p. 54), Parts of Myself (p. 58). The topic for **Gathering IV** focused on the subtopic Putting It All Together: A Mandala (p. 62).

For the first group session, Gathering I, each participant completed the same subtopic activities. For the two individual sessions, Gathering II and III, each woman selected their own choice of a subtopic. In addition, during Gathering III, each participant completed a creative journaling activity that centered around the poem *Stations* (Lorde, 1986). For the last session, Gathering IV, the group presented their images of a creative journaling pause, pondered the pauses, and wrapped-up the study. Following each creative journaling pause, participants reflected on their experience and created a summary of their thoughts, either through haiku, short summary of three to five sentences, or some form of a brief description.

Engaging in Conversations and Writing Moments

Within each gathering, the participants engaged in group conversations, haiku, and reflective writing moments that helped to provide the text needed to unearth the themes of the study and create a phenomenological description of a creative journaling pause. In phenomenology, the questions were formed to allow for a "*gathering of* and *reflecting on* lived experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. 63). As each conversation progressed, it flowed in various directions—making it impossible to have just scripted questions for the entire conversation. As additional questions arose, the conversation was furthered. Phenomenologists always aim to keep the conversation close to the experience as lived; our resolve is to unearth (uncover and discover) the lived experience.

Therefore, for this study, the prompting questions were used to begin every conversation; and, on occasion, a question was used to gear us back to the essence of the conversation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, "The essence of the *question* is to open possibilities and keep them open" (Gadamer, 1975/2013, p. 310). The questions

opened conversation about journaling as well as helped to uncover the nature of a creative journaling pause. For this study, a conversation topic or subtopic began with a question like one of the following:

1. What memory or memories do you have about journaling throughout your life? …as a child? adolescent (pre-teen/teenager)? adult?
2. Tell me about a time you paused to write or draw to focus yourself.
3. Tell me about a time when writing and/ or journaling helped you think through a situation or respond to a situation.
4. What is it like for you to take a creative journaling pause?
5. What does it mean for you to pause and explore the question *Who am I?*
6. Tell me about your thoughts concerning creative journaling as a way for you to pause an explore the question of *Who am I?*
7. In this concentrated amount of time, what does it feel like to allow this creative journaling pause to serve as an experience of respite in your life?
8. In reflecting on your reasons to pause and participate in a structured time of creative journaling, what was/were the determining factors?
9. How do you feel as you pause to create—words, images, and poetry—to express yourself?

The first gathering conversation aimed to unearth creative journaling experiences as a child, adolescent, and/or adult. This gathering helped the women center and open themselves in the creative journaling pause. After this session, it seems the women were more apt to talk about their experiences across the span of their lives—childhood, adolescent, and/or adult. The second gathering conversation aimed to unearth the lived experience of taking a creative journaling pause to explore the question *Who am I*. Coupled with thinking about their journaling experiences, this gathering prompted the women to remember life experiences that may have helped with forming who they are as individuals. The third gathering conversation aimed to unearth the experience of a creative journaling pause, retreating and creating to workshop herself. This gathering centered the women in talking about creative journaling pause experiences that not only assists themselves, but others. The fourth and last gathering aimed to discuss the

unearthing of two things: 1) the participant's mandala, or personal circular graphic with symbolic patterns, images, and/or words that speak specifically to their personal experiences of a creative journaling pause; and, 2) their most memorable creative journaling pause moments. Capacchione (2015) writes, "The mandala, a design form that radiates out from a center … is intended as a drawing meditation for centering and integrating the self. In times of confusion or stress it is a way to … 'pull yourself together'" (p. 62). O'Donohue (1997) writes, "Human memory is … refined, sacred, and personal. Memory has its own inner selectivity and depth. Human memory is an inner temple of feeling and sensibility. Within that temple different experiences are grouped according to their particular feeling and shape" (p. 173). With their mandalas and memories, the last gathering allowed the women to present their thoughts of a creative journaling pause and closed the study.

Following the conversations for gatherings 1 and 2, participants received a creative journaling reflection activity taken from *The Creative Journal: The Art of Finding Yourself* (Capacchione, 2015); each activity aligned with the discussion topic of the day and were completed prior to the next retreat. The purposes of these assignments were to keep the women grounded in the study. The first writing prompt, My Life History: A Time Line, included the following the question, What have been the key events and experiences in my life? (p. 36); this question was expanded to include creative journaling memories. The second writing prompt, Time/Life Map, included the following:

> …make a "map" or diagram of your life. …Study your map and ask yourself: Are there any aspects of my life that I want to change? Are there some I'd like to limit or drop altogether? Are there some things missing that I want to include in my life? (p. 46)

Both the conversations and writing moments assisted with gathering the lived experiences of the creative journaling pause.

Preparing The Sand Gardens

Each type of gathering—group or individual—had a set schedule of activities. For the first group gathering, the participants included all women of the study and the researcher (myself). For the second group gathering, the participants included five of the six women due to an unexpected scheduling conflict for one participant. The gathering location was Maryland; and, the gathering room was set-up for group and individual activities. For the individual gathering, the participants included one study participant and the researcher (myself); the gathering location was in a home (either the participant's or the researcher's home); and, the gathering room was set-up to meet the needs of the scheduled activities. The one participant who lived outside of the Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area joined the sessions via technology (using WebEx, an online system that allows face-to-face interaction). All gatherings were completed within a five-month span.

Scheduled Activities

The scheduled activities provided moments of pause within each type of gathering experience—the group gathering experience and individual gathering experience. Through conversational style interviews and discussion, both types of gatherings unearthed a saying, showing what is present and what is absent in a creative journaling pause when experiencing it alone or in community.

During each type of gathering, there was a beginning, middle, and end activity. The two group gatherings took place within 4 hours (240 minutes). The beginning activity was a short centering activity—practicing *lectio divina*; the middle activity was

an educative activity—practicing the creative journaling pause. The end activity was the engagement activity—engaging in silent haiku and/or reflective writing and conversations prompted with open-ended questions about the phenomenon.

The two individual gatherings with the participant and the researcher took place within 2.5 hours (150 minutes). The beginning activity was a short centering activity—practicing *lectio divina;* the middle activity was an educative activity—practicing the creative journaling pause. The end activity was the engagement activity—engaging in silent haiku and/or reflective writing and conversations prompted with open-ended questions about the phenomenon.

To Write Myself, a Miscellany of Life Writings

> Writing is a reflexive activity that involves the totality of our physical and mental being. To write means to write myself, not in a narcissistic sense but in a deep collective sense. To write phenomenologically is the untiring effort to author a sensitive grasp of being itself—of that which authors us, of that which makes it possible for us to be and speak as parents and teachers, etc., in the first place. (van Manen, 1997, p. 132)

A creative journal pause may seem like a self-absorbed writing and drawing activity to a passing observer. However, the journaling being is neither disengaged from her own presence in the world, nor is she selfishly self-absorbed. Like phenomenology, creative journaling allows for a natural unearthing of lived experience though language. This continued engagement causes the journaling woman to reflect carefully and deeply about her own life in the world with others. Unearthing the lived experiences of women journal writers in a new and meaningful way is an essential contribution to educational research. This human science research will hopefully afford educators with new perspectives for encouraging females—girls and women—with meaningful opportunities to nurture themselves as lifelong learners and active participants in the world with others.

The desired end is to help women fearlessly *own* their life stories and *write* themselves as individual women "bearing their own record."

In the next chapters, four and five, the journey continues into and through the sand gardens, or creative journals, of the women who participated in the study. The phenomenon showed itself through the creations of creative journaling activities and all-embracing conversations. The themes and insights of a creative journaling pause were revealed. The sand, or page of the journal, opened space for authenticity which emerged into external expressions of the internal personal self. Next, in chapter four, each woman, each conversation gives way to the substances of a creative journal pause.

CHAPTER FOUR:
AN OASIS WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF LIFE

Oasis
An oasis appeared amid my life,
beckoning me with arms opened wide—
"Mi amor, mi amor, toma tiempo para ti. Mi amor, mi amor, estoy aquí para ti."
"My love, My love, take time for you. My love, my love, I'm here for you."
My heart opened and accepted the embrace—
a refreshing oasis holding time for space.
(S. Riley, 2017)

For each woman in my study, her first considerations regarding a creative journaling pause were masked in a discussion about time—finding time, losing time, needing time, wanting time, taking time, and giving time. On the surface, time was the culprit. A creative journaling pause was not doable for her daily life, let alone her participation in a doctoral study. However, as each woman engaged with the possibility of a retreat—a withdrawal within her daily life to a place that allowed her to pause and dwell with herself for a short period—time was no longer a problem, but a solution. Her acceptance into the study was birthed from the notion that a creative journaling pause could be a retreat that opened a space in time, within her own life, just to live, just to be, just to create, just to breathe.

In fact, once this phenomenological study began, something did happen. A deeper conversation about place, intertwined with time, began to unfold as the participants and I engaged in creative journaling activities and discussions. Time was no longer about the minutes ticking away around the face of a clock, but about the place and places that allowed them to embrace an occasion of entering into an authentic, or true, expression of self. In a sense, prior to the engagement, the imprint of place was wrapped and hidden in words that are so often attributed to and associated with time—history, occasion,

circumstance, and condition. For each woman, this notion or narrative of time became about her locale, her place, her environment and the thing—her thing—that allowed a pause, a retreat, or a withdrawal. It was about finding the place that gives way to a dwelling—a space and/or spaces for her to reside physically, mentally, and spiritually without a depletion of who she needs to be outside of the time used to participate in a creative journaling pause. This place is what Orchid calls, the oasis in the midst of chaos—a physical, mental, and/or spiritual place found within the parameters of life as she journeys in and out of various situations and/or roles. It is a place, like an oasis, that gives space to dwell in rest, freedom, and renewal, but never exhaustion. As Heidegger (1971b) defines:

> To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth. (p. 149)

Oasis from the Coptic *ouahe* is a dwelling place. For the person who dwells, this place provides a thing, a catalyst, to connect and communicate with God, self, and others (persons and/or things) in a tangible, cerebral, and sacred way. This catalyst allows conversations between self and others that are constant and refreshing, continuously stimulating the person who engages.

For this study, the person who dwells is the study participant, and the catalyst is her journal, the thing that provides the connection and the pathway for an internal and external journey toward self. Each woman was encouraged to dwell within a place that offered her a space to let her self just be, or to just exist as herself, no roles attached. For

the most part, each woman did. Each woman met me in a place that allowed her spatial freedom in a tangible, cerebral, and sacred way.

The physical, or tangible, aspect provided the natural, environmental space with a stillness and rest that embraces both the mental and spiritual: Where can I go to engage in a creative journaling pause that allows me to think freely and connect with the divine? The mental, or cerebral, aspect provided the thinking space that allows both the physical and the spiritual care of self: Where can I go to engage in a creative journaling pause that allows me to focus on a particular aspect or particular aspects of my life while in connection with the natural and the divine? The spiritual, or sacred, aspect provided both the physical and mental connection with something higher than oneself: Where can I go to engage in a creative journaling pause that allows me to connect with the divine in a natural and intellectual way? The three-dimensional experiences (physical, mental, and spiritual) unfold as each woman speaks from within a space that opens or brings forth the nature of her true self through a creative journaling pause, the time spent journaling creatively. Each aspect cradled the participant's ability to know and feel connected to her self and others, as appropriate as we explored the phenomenological question, **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

In this chapter, the conversations with **Belle, Dianne, Marsha, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower** helped me to develop and explore themes to understand the lived experience of a creative journaling pause. Though the themes are presented as a collective, the experience of each woman is personal due to the solitary nature of journaling. Therefore, within each theme, each woman's creative journaling pause experience is uncovered. Four themes surfaced. **A Disturbance Awakens—A Journey**

Towards An Oasis speaks to the personal awakening and/or journey each woman experiences and takes to arrive at the place where she feels the need to take a moment to participant in creative journaling pause. **A Chasm Remembered—A Vulnerability Exposes The Path To An Oasis** speaks to the unearthing of life stories, or past life experiences that not only fill in the gaps of life lived by connecting each woman's past to her present, but also affects the way in which she might think and move in the future—prior to entering a creative journaling pause. **A Moment Revealed—An Expression Unfolds In the Oasis** speaks to each woman's personal creative journaling pause imprint as she expresses her inner thoughts and feelings outwardly, finding the lost and losing the found. **An Openness Extended—A Return from the Oasis** speaks to the helpful posture each woman presents upon her return from a creative journaling pause. For each theme, the women speak from within a space that opens or brings forth the nature of the true self through a creative journaling pause, a moment in time spent journaling creatively.

A Disturbance Awakens—A Journey Towards An Oasis

Choice ignited my mood to
enter solitary places on my own accord, pausing to
hold-on to listen to create to just be

knowing deep inside an oasis awaits to
address the disturbance within my Being—
caught in between time, the space amid my birth and my death.

Renewing my mind to think.
Nurturing my spirit to pray.
Constructing my body to do.
Enhancing my vision to see.
Refreshing my life to begin again

CHANGED.
Yet still,

I AM

befriending every moment that I must breathe—
reclaiming the Me that I am within Myself—
an oasis awaits to bring me through
what once disturbed me.
I choose to live.
(S. Riley, 2018)

In Latin, the word disturbance is derived from *disturbare*, or disturb, which means to "throw into disorder," "to frighten," and "to stir up, agitate." For each woman of this study, the mere asking for her active participation sent her into a moment of disarray, confusion, and apprehension. What must I create? How long will it last? Where will it be? Yet, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the notion of a temporary retreat, or withdrawal, which opened a space in time, within her own life, stirred up a sense of freedom to examine and explore her thoughts about life—in general and in particular to herself. Through my conversations with each woman, I learned the nuances of her hesitation to join me and the other participants at the table to journal about herself. She, the participant, needed first to find it in herself to extract herself from her own life. She had to allow her feelings, or mood, to accept the offering of making a choice to accept this moment in time as a pause for self.

The Journal and the Journey: Thinking-Toward The Oasis To Get-Away

For each of the women, the practice of writing their lives started long before we came together as a group in the fall of 2016. Like me, with the ease of a writing utensil, most of the women were childhood diary writers—adolescent girls peering into their deepest feelings, while pouring their thoughts out and into the confines of a bound notebook as Dianne informs, "When I was a teenager, I used to have a diary. I just used to write about how I was feeling." Usually, it is a feeling of anxiety, an uneasiness of

something—either a person or thing—that brings or leaves us in a state of mental distress; disturbed, yet, made aware that we, though, here in the place we stand are lost to ourselves.

It was the writing, and sometimes drawings, that gave way to our journeys beyond where we sat or stood, releasing our thoughts through our hands, from the utensil to the page or area that accepted our creative gesture. The diary, bound notebook, or journal has always been a place available for us to engage with ourselves about personal life experiences. Through it, we could caress the unspoken words of our lives and/or develop a mode of communication with the near, but distant divine as Orchid explains:

> I probably started writing in a diary when I was a pre-teen; and, then, probably through my teenage years; and, then, on and off, since then. …I think for me, it's when life events [happen] or I feel like nobody understands me, so let me just journal. Or, it's also, lately become a way of praying. …it's sort of like my conversation with God.

For the most part, it is this type of remembering that lured the women back to this place, the place of coming to the edge of their life path to temporarily get away.

> Usually, I think about the song, (Orchid changes her voice and sings) "Don't push me cause I'm close to the edge. I'm trying not to lose my head." It's usually when I'm at that breaking point, you know, that I'm like: Okay, I need to get away. (Orchid)

With one accidental push, intentional or not, they might find themselves scrambling to avoid the fall or possibly imagining themselves floundering in the free fall awaiting the splat, the breaking point. Thus, anticipating this disastrous moment of a decline, the women seek and find a means of escape, a moment to get away. It is getting away to a place, like the diary or journal, where there is a reflection of the feeling that says: I got you and your journey. It is a getting away to a place where you can journal, or create, and potentially share a journey, your journey, with yourself and others.

Thompson (2011) writes, “Keeping a journal is a journey into the self and with the self; it is also a record of the life lived” (p. 27). From the Old French, journey is *journeé*, “a days length.” It is “a defined course of traveling; one’s path in life (https://www.etymonline.com/word/journey). This understanding aligns with the way the women of the study used the word “journey” within the context of their sentences during our conversations. The coupling of the journal and the journey is key to the reason of getting away to embrace our life experiences as Sharron asserts, “How can I do a journey if I don’t have a journal? That’s the testimony of my life. That’s the witness. … So, by me doing that I’m walking the journal, the journey that I’m supposed to walk. My journal, my journal is what I have written, my experience.” Capacchione (2015) expresses the same sentiment: “Your journal is a place to let yourself out, channel your private inner world into a tangible form” (pp. 4-5). Each agreed that a journal was not bound to a notebook, but to whatever stance a creative journaling person chooses to use to express her or himself. Yet, getting there—to the place of the journal—is not an easy task for most, which makes the thinking toward all the more essential for the arrival at a place that holds the space for us to just be.

Considering the Oasis, The Worries of Opening Space

> Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. … If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking *of* that bridge that *in itself* thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From the spot right here, we are there at the bridge—we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness. …Spaces, and with them space as such—“space”—are always provided for already within the stay of mortals. Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man, [sic]. (Heidegger, 1971b, pp. 156-157)

For many of the women in this study, getting to the place of a creative journaling pause is like the process of thinking toward the old bridge in Heidelberg; it requires a thinking that persists though the distance to that location. The thinking is deliberate and focused and here, wherever they stand in the present. It is thinking toward the space that allows them to dwell in a creative journaling pause even before they are there, in the journal, constructing their life's journey on the earth, beneath the sun, with God. It—this thinking toward—also requires persisting through the struggles and tensions of getting there, the new here, the place in which creative journaling actually happens. Through the words of Orchid, we get an understanding of how thinking toward the creative journaling pause may feel for a woman who is a wife and a mother.

> I look forward to it [the creative journaling pause], even if it's just a few hours. Getting here sometimes is stressful though, because I have to plan and prepare the family. … So, getting here is sometimes difficult to prepare. To prepare them…until I get back. Okay, you've got food, you can live three or four hours until I get back. (Orchid)

Orchid's words of "stressful" and "difficult" are signs of her struggle to open a space as she prepares her family and works through her own tensions of being here to getting there to being there. Each phrase describes an existence—the present stance of where she is (being here) to the conceivable stance of moving forward (getting there) to the actual stance of her arriving at the place she has come (being there). In addition, the utterances of planning and preparing the family signify hope, increasing the likelihood of getting there becoming the tangible reality of being there. This planning and preparation helps her to think toward being there (in the place of the creative journaling pause) with the understanding of her returning back to here (in the home of her family), "Okay, you've got food, you can live three to four hours until I get back." Her dwelling is bi-

fold; her loyalty is not to one or the other, but both—within a creative journaling pause and within a family bond.

For Heidegger, dwelling is "always a staying with things" (1971b, p. 151). It is the way to preserve what he calls the fourfold—the earth, the sun, divinities, and mortals—by bringing the presence of each into things, those items that help to gather and/or assemble together (Heidegger 1971b).

> Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal. …The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes …and blue depth of the ether. …The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment. …The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. …Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities. … Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling. (Heidegger, 1971b, pp. 149-150)

At this point in the study, the most interesting element of the fourfold is that the mortals "dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing" (Heidegger, 1971b, p.150). Their existence is not without the others—the earth, the sun, and divinities—but in conjunction with the fourfold. Orchid's desire for self-care underlines and initiates her care for the family as she plans and prepares them for her temporary absence from the home. In her absence, she is still the lover to her husband and the mother to her child. The prepared food and the announced hours of her return emphasize the sparing of her presence as a caregiver in her role as wife and mother in the family unit.

> In saving the earth, in receiving the sky, in awaiting the divinities, in initiating mortals, dwelling occurs as the fourfold preservation of the fourfold. To spare and preserve means: to take under our care, to look after the fourfold in presencing. What we take under our care must be kept safe. …dwelling itself is always a staying with things. (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 151)

This keeping safe of what we take under our care reminds me of Sunflower's tension, or struggle in thinking toward her journey to a creative journaling pause. When asked about her taking the time to pause, Sunflower responds, "I think there's a part of me that rebels against it." Even with the scheduling of the creative journaling pause sessions, Sunflower had to work through various competitive thoughts in her mind. For instance, she states:

> [T] here was this thing in my head: Okay, this is a good day; I can do this. And, [then] be like: Well, no, but you could also do this and this on that day. Or you can do this for work. Or you could go back and watch this or do this. And, it was just like I always felt like there was something that was competing against the priority even though I knew that I would enjoy it once I got here. I know that it was important to me to be a part of this, you know, not only because of my relationship to you, but because it's something that I wanted to do.

Sunflower reminds us that thinking toward a particular thing may stimulate a feeling of competition between caring for ourselves and caring for others (people and/or things). Yet, the coupling of relational ties and personal wants aids in thinking toward the thing that is known to cause joy once a person gets there, to the place of the thing.

Of course, setting boundaries or prioritizing our time is essential to maintaining a certain level of care for self and others. However, if not cautious, it could mean sacrificing our own needs for the needs of others (people and/or things) as Sunflower asserts about her own experience:

> …and, it was never a top priority in my head because I felt like there was so many other things that … were more important that I should be doing, like I felt like I was cheating on those things that should be more important. Like taking care, doing laundry, taking care of the house, doing stuff for work, getting errands done. You know: I always felt like I was almost cheating the system. … Even reading, like, I used to read books. … Like I used to love to read. Now, I feel like if I sit down to read that book I'm cheating on my priorities, so now I listen to audiobooks while I'm working, while I'm doing other things. … That's the only time I listen to an audiobook, and I do other things.

Sunflower's feeling of cheating offers an understanding for how it is possible to tip the scales, so to speak, toward imbalance in our lives. For instance, Sunflower's use of the word "cheating" implies that her time is not used honestly or fairly unless she is using it on something or someone other than herself. The prioritizing of herself is deceptive and dishonest; thus, the feeling of cheating the system. Yet, the word cheating was not always used in this negative sense. It comes from the Old French *escheat*, which is a "legal term for revision of property to the state when the owner dies without heirs, literally 'that which falls to one" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/cheat). Unfortunately, this definition evolved as the "royal officers" who gathered the property became known for their "unscrupulousness" or dishonesty, which in turn changed the meaning of the verb over the years to "confiscate," "deprive unfairly," and "deceive, impose upon, trick" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/cheat).

In a general sense, when using the initial definition, "cheating the system" is not occurring when we prioritize ourselves. Upon death, there is neither a transfer of our personal time from one person to another, nor is there a way for anyone to seek it. Our time is our time to alter and use within the roles and responsibilities of who we are. Therefore, we do not need to feel like we are cheating the system because our personal time is a system within itself. However, it is understandable how this feeling may exist for Sunflower and the rest of us. This cheating the system is our sense, or feeling, of guilt; and, "although our guilty feelings haven't put an end to the Seven Deadly Sins or persuaded us to obey all Ten Commandments, they have without question slowed us down considerably" (Viorst, 1986/1998, p.130).

> Our guilt becomes our own when, at around the age of five we begin to develop a superego, a conscience, when the "No, you can'ts" and the "Shame on you's"

> which used to be outside of us regroup our internal critical voice. Our guilt becomes our own when instead of feeling, "Better not do it: they will not like it," that "they" is no longer our mother and father but—us. (Viorst, 1986/1998, p. 130)

The description Viorst (1986/1998) gives of guilt is discouraging. Yet, it is also encouraging because silencing our own critical voice, or the grave thoughts that we allow to dance in our minds, is stoppable. We do not have to allow or participate in a dance that critically seeks to deprive or distract us from something good in our lives. Each dance is our choice. We choose to dance with guilt as our lead partner—or not. Allowing ourselves the choice is healthy.

> Healthy guilt is appropriate—in quantity and quality—to the deed. Healthy guilt leads to remorse but not self-hate. Healthy guilt discourages us from repeating our guilty act without shutting down a wide range of our passions and pleasure. We need to be able to know when what we are doing is morally wrong. We need to be able to know and acknowledge our guilt. (Viorst, 1986/1998, p. 139)

Even though challenging at times, we can make a choice of saying yes or no to the guilt we feel as we examine the reasons for why we may or may not choose to continue with our actions. In this case, the action was to open space to participate in a creative journaling pause.

Interestingly, as the conversations continued, Sunflower admitted that her decision to participate in the study was based on her friendship with me. At first, she felt guilty, or a lack of duty, about participating in the study due to her feelings of cheating the system or dividing her time and neglecting her household responsibilities. Then, she felt a need to participate out of obligation, or duty, to friendship.

> When I first started, my primary decision was because I had a relationship with you. We were close friends; and, I could see your passion for it. And, for me, I wanted to be a part of it because it was important to you. And, I honestly didn't see much benefit for myself in it at all. I just felt like it was important to Sonya; and, I wanted to be a part of it and I wanted to help.

From Sunflower's perspective, she cared about the things that were important to her friend; and, this care became the determining factor for her to join the group. Initially, at the beginning of the study, she could not see how this experience would benefit her personally. Yet, as the study progressed, Sunflower realized that she became doubly motivated to participate with the understanding that she was not only helping a friend, but also helping herself.

> … as we started to do it, and, I started reflecting and talking about myself and where I come from and dates that have changed me and made me into the person I am, it brought up things in me that I didn't even remember were there. And, like I said: I started going back and looking at some of my old poetry, thinking about some of the things that had happened to me … in high school. I forgot that that happened, you know. And, thinking about the people and things that had happened and what that means; and, why things are the way they are now and what that means. So, I think that now, that's influencing me moving forward more now. I still have the peace of … I feel the obligation to be, you know here for my friend and help her and be a part of something that she's passionate about. But now, I'm starting to see that it's good for me and how it's helping me connect with myself. So, now I have both pieces as a motivation.

In a sense, the measure of our time exists only to the extent we are willing to live it out. It is ours to divide within every facet of our lives from work to play, opting for a more balanced life. For the most part, it is us cheating ourselves when we neglect to set boundaries, or measure our time, to prioritize ourselves for the intent of a balanced life. Our time is ours to prioritize.

Philosopher Tom Morris (2015) describes this common measure of balanced living in his novel, *The Oasis Within*, during a conversation between an uncle and his nephew about what it means to have real balance:

> Some people don't understand this at all. When they're working, they wish they were resting, or playing. When they rest or play, they feel guilty and think they should be working. … Real balance simply means changing and redirecting our energy when the time is right, and turning to whatever other good thing we had

> not just been doing. We change when change is right. But living always with distraction or regret, guilt or frustration, won't help anything. (p.14)

Unfortunately, "We live in a world that doesn't understand the true, measurable value and benefits of downtime, and we are suffering because of it" (Paul, 2017, p. 7). Like most women, Paul (2017) describes her balancing act as "juggling work, motherhood, marriage, improving her health, connecting with friends" and maintaining "a livable home" (p.7). She, too, is "always striving to learn how to manage" her time better and "be more focused" (p.7). Therefore, Paul suggests achieving this balance via what she calls an "oasis in time, a safe haven for personal restoration" (xii) and "oasis time, a time that helps you reorient to what matters most in life" (xi).

> It is a time that resets your inner compass so that you can remember and act on what is important. It provides time for you to rest and regain your bearings. It breaks the fatigue and burnout cycle that robs you of your zest and health. It provides time for genial, unhurried connections with others. In other words, a weekly day of rest can restore your deepest connections and communities and, in so doing, save your life. (Paul, 2017, p. xi)

Interestingly, Sunflower and Orchid are not the only women in the group of six who speak of the tension or struggle of taking a break and making space for a creative journaling pause in their lives. The others speak of it as well—Marsha from the perspective of personal investment; Sharron from the perspective of guardianship; and, Dianne and Belle from the perspective of finding space in the confines of particular situations and occasions.

Sacrificing and investing. For Marsha, the break and space are investments that require sacrifice: "You have to sacrifice for it. You got to sacrifice for it. … in past times in life, I've had the opportunity to journal. I've made the time and the space to journal." However, the ability to sacrifice does not come easily. Like Sunflower, Marsha speaks of

a type of rebellion—the resistance she feels when trying to commit to participating in a creative journaling pause: "There seems to be a challenge to taking the time, which I found to be very interesting. …Recently, with this particular set aside, I had an injury. And everything in me was like, well maybe you should postpone. Out of that resistance, I was determined." With her resolve not to yield to the resistance, Marsha reveals a type of awareness that struggle can be an indicator of significance in one's life. The resistance can be a prompting of something important. For instance, she states:

> You know what? This must be important; so, I'm going to press through it. So, I'm feeling that there is a challenge with time; that there's something else that's trying to or has the wherewithal to prevent. So, recognizing that there is value in it, pressing through to keep it. Um, the pressing through to keep is the reward on the other side. And, that is: Know yourself. Getting and taking the time to know self.

For Marsha, resistance is not automatically a bad thing. She feels that it is an indicator of value; it is a pull between valuing oneself by getting and taking time to know self despite the pull to subscribe to the protocols of society, culture, or home. Though it presents a sort of tug-of-war, whatever is in the middle of the pull and push is a valued thing. It seems the more Marsha stayed with this concept of value, the more she recognized the importance of getting and taking time for herself: "… there's value in having set aside time to pause … especially for Black women, everything for us requires time. It takes time to do our hair or not do it. That's a conscious decision, right?" From Marsha's perspective, when women, especially Black women, make a mindful or deliberate decision to take hold of time and use it to nurture themselves—like tending to their hair—they are accepting the freedom to embrace, support, and encourage themselves.

> …getting to the place and space of stepping outside of the American paradigm, that says everything has to be right now. That pressure—right now, right now, right now. Oh you can't get your hair done in fifteen minutes. You should be getting your hair done [but] that takes too long. Why should it take you that long to take a bath and do that this and the other? Too long! So, in recognizing that not only is it all right, but it's okay. Actually, it's a privilege to take the opportunity to take more time to do whatever is, cause you're spending it on oneself. (Marsha)

Marsha's comments exude from the practices of caring for certain types of Black hair in its natural state. For a Black woman with a thick, curly hair texture, time is of the essence. Washed and/or just wet hair requires an investment of time. The scalp and hair must be massaged and caressed with creams and oils for each of the curls to reveal themselves. Nurturing each strand of hair is a given. Depending on the length of a woman's hair, this process may require an extended amount of dedicated time. However, even though many Black women consider their individual person valuable, this extended amount time for hair care is not always welcomed or deemed as valuable as Marsha vividly explains:

> So, the fact that we don't necessarily want to spend that concentrated time with ourselves because our society has said time is valuable. And, if you are not making money, making something, you're wasting time. …why waste time on something that's not valuable? We'll stop spending time with ourselves, on ourselves, and accept doing superficial things that the world says is best, artificial.

As Marsha discusses, the artificial becomes a time-consuming aspect that twists and confuses the valuable for the invaluable as individuals alter themselves to the ideals, or norms, of society at the expense of themselves.

> … Now, I'm not downing folks who do, but this is just my perspective: Sistas [sic] who look like something out of a magazine—fake hair, that's not—we know that's not Afrocentric hair. …but we'll spend that time and money—three hours—on fake hair, fake lashes, fake nails, buying crazy looking clothes that don't speak to who we really are, but speak to a paradigm that's been set up in the world. … We'll take that on as authentic rather than taking the time, that same time, and going back to see who we really are. (Marsha)

Without judgment, but with understanding, Marsha expresses an understanding that when taking the time is not welcomed, it is not only a devaluing of the time needed for self-care, it is also a devaluing of a woman's physical being and/or natural authentic state. She reminds us that unless we deem taking time for ourselves as valuable, we may lose the desire to see who we really are as individuals. For the most part, societal norms can out-shadow a person's perspective of self, if not careful.

Breaking out to take time out. As a loving and caring grandmother, Sharron was involved highly in the daily activities of her grandchild's life to the extent that she struggled to prioritize herself, often neglecting opportunities to replenish herself. Receiving the invitation to this study gave her a specific opportunity to open a space to prioritize and focus on herself once again:

> I needed to break out. [chuckles] I needed to break out. I liked it because, I have a 16-year-old grand[child] now, [who] lives with me; and, everyday from Monday through, sometimes, Saturday, it is [my grandchild's]. And I'm not used to that. I'll take Sunday all for me. But I noticed the things I like to do for me, it was slowly being put to the side. I said "oh, no no, no. I've come too far." This gave me the moment to get back on track. (Group Session)

As Sharron spoke, those of us listening made soft oral sounds of acknowledgment as the phrase "get back on track" was uttered. This phrase was familiar to us, the women who often multi-task to care for others, sometimes or oftentimes, at the expense of ourselves. It is code for I know I have veered away from myself, the authentic me that I am. For Sharron, the ability to share her feelings in community and to reveal that break out offered her permission to focus on herself, to get back on track, to veer back toward herself.

> Just being around, you know, women, just being around where we could sit, talk, laugh, express. Something to just be at peace, peace and quiet. No Darling (that's what [my grandchild] calls me), Darling this or Darling that. You know: it's just

> … It's something I wanted just for me. To let me know I still want to stay focused on me. Cause sometimes we … I mean I'll say it for myself.

Yet, little did she know, her words were in fact saying it for us too—the unified "we" she started to say but deferred to the independent I with the word "myself." Sharron's words confirmed that this opportunity is a way for her to be with herself. It is an opportunity to reclaim the thing (or things) she knows not only reveals her true self, but also helps her to live completely out in the open, if just for a moment in her break out state. In other words, as Sharron acknowledges and remembers, we, the other women, also acknowledge and remember the individual part of ourselves we sometimes, oftentimes, forget.

> Sometimes I would forget that, "Oh Sharron, remember you were walking every day. Three, four miles a day. You're not doing it. Oh Sharron, you know, you used to go to therapy. You're not going anymore. Oh Sharron, you used to call your girlfriends. Oh Sharron, you're not; you come home and you go straight to bed." Falling right back down into that hole that God had pulled me out. I said, "Ah, that's right. The 19th, you're supposed to" … I was going to distribute baskets, Thanksgiving baskets. But I said, "No. I need this for me." …and, I'm glad I did it. So, it is a good thing. It was a really good thing for me to do this today.

Even in reading the transcript of the group conversation, I was able to re-live the effects of Sharron's words as they affected and touched me and the other women too. Her human insight of forgetting herself nudges us, those listening, to remember ourselves. As MacCullock (2013) reminds us, "The remaining great silences to examine can be grouped in a general category of silences of forgetfulness or oblivion: things not remembered, for both worthy and unworthy motives" (p. 191). The forgotten remembered feels like the first glance or first embrace of reuniting with a cherished and beloved family member or close friend not seen in a long time. Past disagreements and past tensions are insignificant. The love, the warmth, the recollection of what matters are significant. In

this way, Sharron's words are charged with a signification (van Manen, 1997), each touching our own human experiences. Her recollection led us to our own recollection of what we have allowed to be withdrawn from our lives. For example, Orchid chimes in with her rendition of what it means to break out, to take time out, to break from the normal routine or routines of life.

> It's a nice break. I think of, when I take time out for things like this; or, you know, whatever it is. Something different from the routine is a reminder that it's something for me. And I think we, or at least I, spend so much of my energy pouring into other people [group agreement] like to my husband, to my daughter, to the people at work, you know: All the energy going out for other people. So, times like this are good reminders that this is for me. So good. [group chuckles]

Both Sharron and Orchid remind us of the good one feels in making and taking a break. Sharron asserts, "So, it is a good thing. It was a really good thing for me to do this today;" and, Orchid affirms, "So, times like this are good reminders that this is for me. So good." From both frames of thought, the group chuckles in support of the bi-fold meanings of break—what it means to remember the things that make us who we are (Sharron). It also reminds us to remember that there is a space, in time, for ourselves, each of us individually (Orchid), even if it means making the space physically out in the open or internally within ourselves as Belle and Dianne assert in the next section.

Take a break, whispers my name.
And with good measure, I answer.
If for no other reason,
to watch the rise and set of the sun—
experiencing the happy in each release of light.
(S. Riley, 2017)

Experiencing the happy. There is a difference between space and place. As discussed in chapter two, Taun (1977) asserts, "Place is security, space is freedom: We are attached to the one and long for the other" (p. 3). For Dianne, the difference is

manifested in the words she uses to discuss the nostalgia, or longing, she holds to live in her own space once again.

> I'll start with the space first. If I was living as I want to live. Yes, I would go to a different space because I would have space carved out—a studio carved out—for me to be creative. Here, right now, it's kind of like the dining room table seems to be my area, only because I'm not in my own space. (Dianne)

However, this deficit of not having a space of her own does not keep Dianne from experiencing the good Sharron and Orchid describe in the previous section. Throughout the years, Dianne has learned how to block out external stimuli, those things that may divert her attention.

> I have to dream it. In my mind, I do have go to a certain place. It's a place where um, I block out everything else; and, I just I focus on the projects that I'm thinking about. Um, it makes me kind of happy too. So, it's like a giddy feeling; and, I'm actually able to block out. So, I do go to a place inside of me; I'm blocking out everything else around me. I hear you, but I don't hear you. …it's a zone, that's what I get into. It's my creative zone. I've been like that my whole life, that's my creative zone.

When needed, this blocking allows Dianne to enter a zone, a mental zone, where she is physically near others, but has gone mentally to a place beyond their range. Her point of reference is focalized within the thoughts of her mind and the movement of her hands. This focalized place is her creative zone, the good place—the place where feelings of happiness and giddiness reside. Yet, Dianne also introduces that even though this creative zone is good, the feelings experienced are multi-layered and can include the emotions of hurt, stress, and/or dismay, to name a few. This place is not good just because of the happy, giddy feelings, but it is also good because it provides a space to be with the array of emotions one may experience—the decent, corrupt and/or apathetic, while creatively letting everything go. For Dianne, the space creates what she calls an "unwinding."

> Unwinding for me, [is] when you're being creative … whatever I may be going through, whatever stress, whatever, anything I may be feeling in life that may be getting me down—unwinding in creativity, it's like pulling me away from that. It takes my mind away from everything negative; and, the creative is like time that is positive for me.

Through the spectrum of emotions, Dianne releases herself to the strides of creativity as she experiences a winding down, a pulling away from the negative aspects of her life. Similarly, Belle speaks of the range of emotions experienced in her journaling experience.

> It's just a reflection on, I guess, the happy times. Most of my entries are happy. Some of them might be sad, like when I made posts about my dad. But it's still somewhat happy because it talked about the relationship and the type of man he was.

After her dad's passing, Belle developed several Instagram posts to reflect on and honor his memory. Like Dianne, Belle is pulled away from negative thoughts. For even in death, which is usually associated with loss and sadness, Belle experiences a happiness as she journals and creates memories about her dad and his life. She, too, enters a creative zone. In fact, of the six women, Dianne and Belle are the two who specifically indicated pausing as a daily ritual in their lives. Their pauses are creative and specific to who they area as individuals. It gives them time to remember, let go, and create.

As discussed further in the next two sections of this chapter, this process of remembering, letting go, and creating allows a range of emotions to reside in the same space of one's body, mind, and spirit. Like the other women mentioned above, both Dianne and Belle made space in their lives to create a journaling experience, which in turn made space for them to experience happiness in the midst of chaos as they crossed the chasm between the past and the present and into the future.

A Chasm Remembered—A Vulnerability Exposes The Path To An Oasis

A Chasm
A divide rests between moments in life.
The story of Yesterday *stands across from* the story of Today
demarcated, defined, remembered—
bouncing light on the dark areas lurking in the shadows of now,
with the possibility of a clear vision for the story of Tomorrow—
A chasm discovered. A jump happens. *A story unfolds.*
An emptiness gone. A fall avoided.
An oasis revealed. A chaos contained.
I am alive. I am still here.
(S. Riley, 2017)

Individually, each woman enters an oasis with a snapshot of her life framed in one or several treasured life-stories, defined by time and details. From story to story, a chasm or an opening is revealed, dividing and defining her past journaling experiences from her present—and, possibly, her future experiences as well. Each story is embedded along the creative journaling journey as a light, revealing the openings along a pathway of life events. This revelation became apparent as we engaged in a creative journaling activity called My Life History: A Timeline, an activity that provided the women with space to pause and reflect on the most significant events and periods of time in their lives from birth to now (Capacchione, 2015). The women averaged about six journaling experiences each that helped to shape the course of their lives.

Upon completion, I could see each woman churning, or thinking about the life shaping experiences, or events. Usually, with each of the women, silence followed the activity, letting me think that there was an appreciation for us taking the time to complete it. However, still, I was not completely sure of the appreciation following the timeline activity until my first individual conversation with Marsha who said:

> …it's about lineage and linkages, but in order to see it, you have to take a pause. So that you can review. You can review the journey; you can respect what God

> has done. But you can also get a glimpse of. You know, the Lord says that—we look at the glass darkly, we don't see but when the truth comes, when the light comes, we'll know all. But God is so awesome, he gives us small glimpses. … You are not a mistake.... And, my journey is not your journey, but the same God is orchestrating our journeys. And, collectively we speak.

Van Manen (1997) asserts, "What appears unspeakable or ineffable one moment may be captured, however incomplete, in language the next moment" (p. 114). For instance, before Marsha speaks she must process; and, like several of the other women in the group, at times, she processes what she feels in a complete manner through biblical Scripture and spiritual terms. In this case, she refers to the Book of Corinthians, relating the creative journaling activity to receiving light, seeing truth, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV). Yet, the Amplified version of this Scripture gives more insight as to why Marsha may have processed the journaling activity in this way. This version includes brackets with words and phrases to give a deeper meaning to each word.

> For now [in this time of imperfection] we see in a mirror dimly [a blurred reflection, a riddle, an enigma], but then [when the time of perfection comes we will see reality] face to face. Now I know in part [just in fragments], but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known [by God]. (1 Corinthians 13:12, AMP)

From Marsha's words, I was guided into realizing that over the years, each woman seemed to practice what Goldberg (2005) encourages, "In the center of chaos, make one definitive act. Just write. Say yes, stay alive, be awake. Just Write." I came to this realization because as Marsha spoke, I remembered the stories a few of the other women told.

With the women's stories, I become aware, or better said—reminded, that the dimmed reflection of our lives becomes illuminated and clear with each word, drawing, and image released to the page. The key is to enter and sometimes own the chaos with language. Britton (1970) asserts, "In considering language as a mode of representing experience, our main stress has been upon its use in turning confusion into order, in enabling us to construct for ourselves an increasingly faithful, objective and coherent picture of the world" (p. 105). Yet, the truth of the matter is: Our first draft, first story, first impressions are sometimes disordered and chaotic in nature. And, I would even venture to say, that regardless of whether it is our first draft or our last and final draft, our creative releases may be messy. Diarist Anais Nin (1969), in writing about one of her book reviews, says it like this:

> Chaos is born out of the great fissures which happen in the telling of the story. There are pauses. Silences. Mysteries. Fissures. It is a quest in the darkness, a stuttering. … The self has to begin each day anew to reassert its existence. Every phrase is a contradiction of the other phrase. (p. 65)

In considering the fissures, we consider the messiness, or the dirtiness, as openings, entrances into a way of re-examining. When allowed, chaos accentuates the limitless contours of life as one story after another is birthed. It is the open space which allows us the opportunity to express ourselves in the lives we live—life experienced, life endured, life rebirthed, one life paradox after another as we aim to accept and change our lives for the better.

Feeling Chaos, Accepting The Chasm

Since 1600, the word *chaos* has been defined as "utter confusion" or "order less confusion" (Online Etymology Dictionary), a frame of thought that could lead to a narrow and negative perspective with almost no regard for possibilities. However, in the

late 1400s, the definition signified some sort of space—or the lack thereof—that could be filled with endless possibilities. In Old French or Latin (*chaos*), it was defined as a "gaping void: empty, immeasurable space;" in Greek (*khaos*), it was defined as an "abyss, that which gapes wide open, that which is vast and empty;" and, in Proto-Indo-European (PIE) (*khnwos*), it was defined as "to gape, yawn." For this study, the definitions of the late 1400s seem to define "chaos" with more appreciation or feeling toward depth and probability and air—empty can be filled, wide open can be inclusive, a yawn can be refreshing. In other words, there is an opening, a space for the possibility or possibilities of something else.

For example, Orchid describes her life as busy and involved in various events, but not necessarily as confused or orderless:

> [My child] is involved in a number of different activities. For my job, I have to work, usually, a little late most nights. …So, there's usually a lot going on. I feel like I have to juggle a lot of different things. So, that's what feels chaotic to me sometimes. …and, so, creative journaling does feel like that calm place, where I don't have to have all the answers. Nobody is asking for a decision from me. … it's a break from having to make decisions. It's a break from having to seem put together. Um, That I can be vulnerable. I can be. I can cry, if I want, as I'm writing. Um, you feel, whatever it is. I don't have to be this person that knows how to do things and can manage life effortlessly.

Orchid's chaotic feeling is derived from the immeasurable space of handling multiple things at one time and needing to have all the answers. The words multiple and all represent a vastness, that is wide open, but also meaningless or empty because of the generalization of their specific meanings—multiple meaning more than one; and, all meaning everything. Yet, like the other women of the study, Orchid does not succumb to the pressures of her feelings; instead, she accepts the opening—the chasm, and, then, accepts this space that leads to a calm place. It is a place set aside just to be herself, to

just exist while engaging in techniques and activities, like a timeline, to tell and embrace her story (or stories) in a creative journaling pause. It is, as Orchid suggests, a place to be vulnerable, which eventually becomes a testimony or evidence of life once lived to eventually acknowledge aloud and share with others.

> Vulnerability is the willingness to take the risk of allowing any event, belief, preference, interest, or emotion of your life to be "on the table" when it is useful to glorify God by encouraging a fellow believer, allowing a fellow believer to encourage you, or evangelizing an unbeliever. It is this disposition that breathes the life of authenticity into relationships and allows them to be mutually enjoyable, enriching, and character-shaping. (Hambrick, 2012, p. 7)

From the Latin word *vulnerare*, vulnerable is defined as a verb meaning "to wound, hurt, injure, [and/or] maim" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/vulnerable). Therefore, it is understandable as to why we guard our life stories with concern. Like in a chaotic state, when we are vulnerable, we are in a state of openness where there seems to be a lack of restriction and plenty of accessibility. Hambrick (2012) emphasizes, "Vulnerability does involve risk. No amount of rightly applied wisdom will completely remove the risk involved in making yourself known to another person. Once you give information to another person, you are no longer exclusively in control of what is done with that information" (p. 7). In this state of openness, as we allow ourselves to be vulnerable or exposed, we also allow ourselves to just be, to just be a light in a dark place or situation.

Telling Their Stories, Crossing The Chasm

> A journal is a room of one's own, that private, quiet place we must have if we are to survive and grow. (Nelson, 2004, p. 4)

> In journal writing, the images and words you use, the interplay between language and psyche, help you keep going and help you see possibilities. (Nelson, 2004, p. 8)

Nelson (2004) characterizes the journal and journal writing as a nurturing dwelling and a constant life journey, respectfully. This description helps to explain how one of the creative journaling exercises of this study motivated the participants to write about and even share their personal life stories. The "My Life History: A Time Line" exercise not only opened their eyes to past experiences, but it also seemed to give them permission to remember and share stories throughout their oasis experiences together.

Using a journal, this creative journaling activity helps to create an environment for unfolding words and images to show and tell our life story. In particular, as discussed in chapter three, words can draw us and carry us away, while at the same time open a space, a temporal dwelling space, where we may have realizations that we never imagined possible (van Manen, 2005). Within an environment fashioned for a deep dive within one's life story, time is fluid—invisible, immeasurable, and inviting. It is like the streams of water flowing through an oasis, refreshing, energizing, and free. For instance, like Orchid shared a brief aspect of her life story, three other women did the same: Sharron shares a story about journaling in the dark; Belle shares a story about journaling on the beach; and Sunflower shares a story about journaling instead of eating.

The women opened themselves to vulnerability even more during this, their first journaling session alone with me as the researcher. It would be easy for me to say, that of course each woman would be vulnerable with me because of the personal relationship outside of this study. However, there were many nuances in their life stories that were new to me, which leads me to say: Even though we know someone personally, it does not mean she has or will ever expose every aspect of her life to us. Sometimes, it takes special activities such as "The Life History" to open certain avenues of time in our lives

otherwise unspoken.

For the most part, our environment apprehends our time, limiting and/or liberating our capacity to gauge the moments that lead to our personal creativity—the ingenuity, resourcefulness, or imagination of our words flowing from our internal selves out. Yet, as gleaned from the conversations with the women of the study, no matter what conditions an environment may impose—or not impose—on their time, there always seems to be an opening, the space in between one life story and another in which time allows them the opportunity to be themselves. This time occurs when they are alone and off-schedule—not in demand or not in service to the Other (a person or thing); and, even when this time is not convenient, it is their own time—the space in which they only belong to themselves, while moving creatively, unrestrained and somewhat clear of any external obstructions. From the beginning of the lived experience to the end, the journey to, in, and from a creative journaling pause is paved with life-stories: some long, some short, some happy, and some sad.

Scribbling in the dark. When Sharron was imprisoned, the time of her journal writing was during the late night, early morning hours, within her prison cell. Lights off meant self-expressions on as she let her writing utensil move across the page in the blindness of the dark, unable to see the letters as they made themselves known to the page. Sharron did not indulge our conversation with the whys of how she become incarcerated; and, too, for this study, it does not matter. What matters is that Sharron is now released, gracing this study with honesty as she remembers and shares the lived experiences of her first journaling activities there, in a dark prison cell.

> When I was incarcerated, that's when I started writing. …Oh, I got so many books, um. That I would write things in journals and times and dates. Sometimes,

> I would get up at two in the morning, one in the morning, just to write in the dark. I didn't even know what I was writing half the time. … if you look at it, you would think I was having a nervous breakdown or I was going crazy or something, because it was scribble. It was all written, sometimes it would go straight, sometimes it wouldn't.

As a verb scribble, from Medieval Latin *scribillare* or Latin *scriber*, means "to write" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/scribble); and, as a noun, scribble means, "hurried or careless writing" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/scribble). As Sharron describes her journal writing, it is obvious that the noun form of the word does not match her experience of journaling in the late-night hours. From the onset, her intention was to write; it was neither hurried nor careless, but deliberate and careful. Even after all these years since her incarceration, she still has the journals, cared for in storage containers: "I started going through the bin of all the stuff I had accumulated in prison. I didn't remember that I was taking biblical seminars; and, all those degrees."

In her environmental darkness, Sharron's resolve to just "be" opened a space; a space to write herself whenever time revealed a path, or a way, to allow a saying—a revealing of personal thoughts, not often known. As she expresses, "[I wrote] in the dark, because we couldn't have the lights on. …I wrote poetry and didn't even know I wrote it. I wrote a lot of things that I wasn't aware I had written." The darkness was like a gift, presented through time, giving Sharron the ability to just be with her own words and her own thoughts. Now, many years later, as she re-reads the journals created in the dark, the light shines. Sharron is able to see her words written on the page, recollecting that space in time from long ago. For even when confined to a prison cell, she was inspired to let her self be changed for the better through faith-based seminars and academic endeavors (see Appendix C).

Posting a little snippet from the sand. Belle prefers to journal and share her thoughts electronically. Her writing board is found via an application called Instagram, which per the company's website is "the home for visual storytelling for everyone …and anyone with a creative passion" (https://www.instagram.com/about/us/).

> Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app available on Apple iOS, Android and Windows Phone. People can upload photos or videos … and share them with their followers or with a select group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram. Anyone 13 and older can create an account by registering an email address and selecting a username.

For Belle, Instagram is her visual journal. It allows her to capture short snippets of her lifestory in a non-conventional way. The hard-bound notebook or journal is not her preference. As she asserts, "I rather type it and with Instragram. I'm not typing paragraphs. It's a summary. Similar to a haiku, but it's a little more than a haiku. So, it's just a summary of what went on in that image. … I just need to get little snippets."

Chavis (2011) explains that "Most of our stories do not cover our entire life span and often simply embody 'spots of time'" (p. 165). These spots of time, or snippets, are just a small portion of Belle's lifestory. Instragram is the tool to help her capture it.

> With the creative journaling, I don't do it in terms of …well, I do it in a kind of writing, but I use my Instagram account. That's my visual. I guess I'll say a visual journal. It is creative because I put pictures of things that I do—mainly my meals and any type of crafts; or, anything that I do. And, I always write some type of description or note with it so that when I look back. "Oh, two years I put up a picture of XYZ and this is what the picture was all about." So, I use Instagram as my creative journaling.

As an example of how it's done, Belle tells the story of visiting a beach in Virginia and capturing her life snippet to post, or share, with her Instagram followers.

> So, like every time, anytime I go to the beach I get up early in the morning so that I can see the dolphins or try to see the dolphins. And, every time I go … I always see the dolphins. So, I was up early [one] morning, before sunrise, just sitting out. Well, I was standing out there; it was really cold; and, after I saw the dolphins, the

> sun started to rise. And, as the sun started to rise, … I don't know why, but I just ended up, watching the waves. And, seeing how the waves were going back and forth, I decided to write my name in the sand. And, as the water kept coming in, it was going back out to sea. It covered up my name; and, then it rolled back away to the ocean; and, my name was still there. So, to me, that symbolizes what God does when He gives you chance after chance; or, you know, when you create or commit a sin. In His eyes, He forgives you for it. And, you're still standing afterwards. So, that's why I did that whole little journaling thing.

For Belle, this snippet provides a story, a visual, and a lesson. The Instagram posting is a slightly longer version of the story recounted above; the visual is a picture of her name written across the wet sand; the lesson shared is: You are forgiven and still standing, not erased. Forgiveness grants a release to accept that one's ability to stand, or exist, even after an indiscretion gives way to the fact there is still more life to live. For this study, within her journal, Belle colorfully draws her name, a bell, water, and sand. Then, she writes: "Belle, the belle, loves the sand and the sea." The sand and sea are constant reminders that she is still standing, still breathing, still here.

Accessing the thing inside. Sunflower has lived through two life-defining points of separation, once in her childhood and once in her young adult years. Each point led her to deal with her emotions and feelings in one of two ways, either through writing or by eating. Yet, both ways gave her a process for what she calls "a way" to access those things inside herself—things.

> I was an only child and I didn't really have any body I could talk to about everything, so I used to do a lot of poetry. And, I really do think that helps me through some difficult things, just being able to write those thoughts down; I also used to have a diary. And, it helped me because you have friends, but when you're a teenager your friends don't offer a lot of beneficial and nourishing feedback or they're not good listeners. So, it's always helpful to me to read and write and process my thoughts.

The poetry and diary writing helped Sunflower "through some difficult things," in particular her childhood experiences of not having anyone to discuss her difficulties of

"fitting in" with her high school peers and the temporary separation of her parents. In fact, the word, thing or things, was attached to every aspect of Sunflower's brief, but poignant story about how separation triggered a need to deal with her emotions and feelings. Interestingly, thing from the Old English *ping* is defined as "meeting, assembly, council, discussion, entity, being, and matter" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/thing). In a sense, through writing Sunflower was meeting with herself to discuss the emotions and/or feelings from deep within. However, as a young adult, the separation of leaving home to study abroad in the United States caused an abrupt cessation in her writing; and, instead of scribbling, she ate. She was no longer able to assemble and meet with herself to think about, let alone write about her feelings and emotions.

> …it's always helpful to me to read and write and process my thoughts; and, then, when I left home and I came to college I gave it up. And, I think I gave it up as a part of my grieving, like I didn't want to think about my feelings long enough to write them down. Like I just pushed everything down, pushed it away. …I gained a lot of weight; and, I didn't want to think about how much I missed my parents. … it was very challenging. (Sunflower)

Eating became, in Sunflower's words, "almost an addiction." It became the thing that allowed her to avoid the words that were forming inside her. This avoidance is dynamic: Sunflower admitted to being self-motivated, allowing "eating as a distraction" to divert herself from experiencing any emotion or feeling related to missing her parents. For the most part as Cameron (2007) asserts, "Everyone knows that we overeat because something is eating us" (p. xvi).

Even though Sunflower spoke of how writing was her way of accessing her deepest thoughts, she needed to remain at a distance from herself: "I would save my emotions, my feelings—words were how I used to let that out. So, I couldn't do the word thing anymore." Sunflower's "word thing," writing poetry and/or diary entries, kept her

aware. As Cameroon (2007) asserts, “Writing makes us conscious” (p. xviii). Being conscious was not what Sunflower wanted. The more she was bound to “be here” [in the United States] “not having friends or making new friends” and not having relatives whom she felt cared, the less she found herself wanting to write, or think about her feelings of missing her parents. Sunflower did not want to be aware of her feelings. If she writes, she becomes conscious. Being conscious would make it difficult for her to act in unconscious ways (Cameron, 2007). The separation from her parents hindered her ability to let herself release her thoughts and feelings through writing. Yet, fortunately for her (and this study too), this hinderance eventually subsided.

> After I finished school, I started gaining some more of my independence back, and I had some more freedom, you know: That’s when I started thinking about writing again.

Viorst (1986/1998) suggests, “Becoming a separate self is not a sudden revelation but unfolding. It evolves, slowly slowly slowly, over time” (p. 44). Upon finishing school and coming into herself as an independent person, Sunflower began, again, recognizing writing as a way to acknowledge and access the part of herself she often hides.

> … I think for me: Writing, really, is reflection; it’s a way that I can access the things inside me that I hide, that I push back because I spend a lot of time, you know, with a lot of people who just want you to be funny and light-hearted; and, you can’t really express the truth you have inside of you. So, it gives you that opportunity to bring that out—to communicate, if not with everyone else, but at least communicate with yourself what you’re really feeling.

As Sunflower writes poetry and diary entries, she does a bending back, a turning away from inauthenticity toward authenticity, gathering things—the emotions and feelings—she once pushed down, away, and/or back into herself. By writing, she acknowledges herself and her own life story to herself (see Appendix D).

For the most part, the story or stories discussed throughout the creative journaling

study reveal the journeys of crossing chasms, showing life patterns and decisions to embrace self and just be. The good thing is: Each of their individual stories lined the pathway that interlays the chasm and provides access into this oasis, our oasis, a creative journaling pause, respectively. With their stories, the women began to define and speak to the experience of a creative journaling pause as it was known to them through their environment. And, yet still, I continued to wonder: Will the story or stories continue on the pathway leading to another creative journaling pause of the same kind? Or does the pathway curve and become something different all together, from moment to moment? Entering the desert, a moment of solitude, develops each woman, developing her further into the woman she yearns to become. And, so, reaching the oasis is not necessarily a lost or a found, but a lost and found.

A Moment Revealed—An Expression Unfolds In the Oasis

> Memory is powerful. And the imagination is strong. Memory can tie us to the past. Imagination can push us to the future. But without truly living in the present, paying attention to it, and knowing it as it is, we can never properly interpret the past or create the best future. …A person is truly blessed who can live with his heart immersed in the one, rich, deep and wide moment that alone is now real. He gives himself the best chance in this life for happiness and great deeds. That person takes his oasis with him wherever he goes. (Morris, 2015, p. 8)

A creative journaling pause is a moment. Moment, from Latin *momentum*, means movement, motion, moving power, alternation, change, short time and instant. The use of these defining words seems strange to describe a phrase that includes the word pause, a word often associated with inaction instead of action. However, as discussed in chapter two, this study defines pause "as periods of apparent noninteraction rather than periods of nonaction" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 4). A pause is not devoid of movement; it is movement, a driving force toward one thing or another. It is a period of movement that

embraces balance, providing a measure for which one lives in real time.

Morris (2015) writes, “Balance is not a steady, static thing. It’s movement. It’s ever changing. The essence of it is care and correction, or awareness and adjustment. It’s an ongoing dance of change, moving from one thing to another. This is the dance that engages us all” (p. 13). As we engage, we recognize that the dance provides a waltz, a gust of wind, a pathway for us to accept the movement life provides in the caresses of a creative journaling pause. Each caress soothes the participant, allowing her to reconsider any angst, tension or disgust, while embracing the moment to sit, if only for a short period of time, to balance herself within the life she lives.

From the Old English *sittan*, sit is the opportunity to sit down, remain, continue, occupy and settle (which also means to come to rest). Each moment of taking time to participate in a creative journal pause allows a person, a woman, time to sit and focus on herself as Marsha explains:

> …it’s a commitment to self. I commit this time—one hour, two hours or whatever, weekly, monthly … it’s a commitment to self to sit down and with purpose, it’s a purposeful sitting down to journal outside of work, family, whoever, responsibility and just focus on self.

This time of sitting is neither motionless nor without drive. The reason for taking this time may be direct or indirect, but either way it requires some type of movement, or undertaking. As Sharron asserts, “Taking time is just not sitting. Taking time is doing as well. Because if I just sit, I get stuck. So, I’ve learned that taking time is going forward in what I may need to do.” The participant is not just sitting, numbing one’s self with inaction. The participant is actively advancing, engaging within a moment, or the moments, birthed out of her creative journaling pause. In particular, the six women of this study emphasized that a creative journaling pause not only entails rest and refreshment,

but also in-depth opportunities to create and bring-forth in their present now with elements of the past and future in mind. It provides them a moment, a moment to dwell and retreat in solitude with herself and God. These opportunities are deeply personal and fluid. Like an oasis's well-spring found in a desert, each opportune moment is a driving force or moving power that instantly inspires a personal retreat, a withdrawal from life's norms, the typical ways in which she lives.

In most cases, this moment restores and replenishes travelers back to their full strength by offering an alternate or change in one life's pace for a short period of time. The desert is no longer viewed as desolate and unforgiving, but wildly alive and forgiving. Within each momentous opportunity, the imprint of who she is as a life traveler unfolds as she navigates the sandy terrains of the desert.

> What makes the desert beautiful, said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well . . ." (Exupery, 1943/1971, p. 93)

Yet, though Exupery's assertion is true, finding a wellspring can be a tedious, isolating, and time-consuming experience for the traveler. However, she walks steadily and determined with the understanding, or inward knowing, that somewhere within the depths of her personal self is an oasis housing a wellspring—a wellspring fashioned to preserve her life for one more moment of breathing, living, and walking out her life as she chooses, creating a possible, imaginable future wherever life leads. Because each creative journaling pause is specific to the person, each woman was able to bring a different perspective to what it may mean to participate in such a movement within one's life.

Within each time zone,
we all live the same hours
explained differently.
(S. Riley, 2018)

When most of us think of an oasis, we like to conceptualize, imagine, and/or romanticize it as a peaceful place; and, for the most part, it can be. Yet, we often forget or conveniently refuse to remember that with every place and situation in life, there is an alternative perspective—a dichotomy, a contrast, or another way from which to experience something and/or from which to choose. A creative journaling pause is the moment in which the participant chooses herself and engages in an activity of expression; however, what she experiences is dependent on the perspective from which the pause begins. This moment may lead to some type of peace, but not always immediately and not always without consequences. For the moment, it unearths expression, giving way to expressive writing—the thinking aloud on paper kind of writing as discussed in chapter one. This kind of writing serves mainly as a means for self-expression as life unfolds its many lived experiences.

A Moment of Expression

> Expressive writing originates from the writer's lived experience—past, present, or imagined future life. Written in the author's own voice, expressive writing creates bridges between thought and feeling, reason and intuition, idea and action. It is equally rooted in the language arts and social science, and it takes multiple forms: journals, poetry, lifestory, personal essay, creative nonfiction, song lyrics, notes, and snippets of thoughts. Expressive writing is democratic and accessible. (Adams, 2013, p. ix)

From the Latin word *exprimere*, express means to "represent, describe, portray, imitate, translate," or literally "to press out" (https://www.etymonline.com). For the most part, expressive writing is a pressing out of the words that represent how we feel and think about particular things and actions of our lives and the lives of those individuals around us. In themselves, the words we use are translations, synchronized representations portrayed outside of ourselves to help others, as well as ourselves, gather a succinct

knowledge of what is being described orally, in written form, or in sign language. There is a mystery, a wonder, and a power of the word as an instrument of creation (Nelson, 2004).

Cepero (2008) writes, “One of the wonders of journaling is that it interprets us to ourselves” (p. 12). The word interpret from Latin *interpretari* means to explain, expound, and understand. The journal made it possible for the women of this study to indulge themselves in their own words, giving them the ability to clarify, illustrate, recognize and appreciate themselves through their own system or systems of expression. For the women of this study, each describes creative journaling as a way to express her thoughts and feelings. In particular, Sunflower discusses the influences of color dispensed from a utensil that gives her the ability to express herself beyond the structural constraints or customs of writing her thoughts externally.

> I think there’s something about using color and using different materials that almost takes off some of the pressure of being truthful and letting stuff out, you know. Because it’s easier to write I am overweight, I have an eating problem when you do it in pink marker, then if you were writing it with a pen. I don’t know why that is. You know: There’s something about color and using different materials that takes away some of the barriers you have in your mind. You can just express stuff.

This description of the influences of color aligns with the discussion of chapter one, recognizing the journal as an art and a science. As an art, it is a way of describing one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions creatively and imaginatively; it is an expression of experience (English & Gillen, 2001). As a science, it allows for the writer to engage in systematic and intentional reflection (English & Gillen). Together, as an art and a science, the journal made it possible for the women of this study to embrace the space of time and indulge themselves in their own words, listening to themselves instead of others.

As Sunflower states, “Writing, really, is reflection.”

> It’s been interesting reflecting on the experiences I’ve had and how they’ve made me the person I am. You know: Instead of me just creating this pathway, to think how my experiences have affected me; and, it’s interesting to take the time to look at that.

Journaling allows a conversation in which the writer has a chance to communicate with herself. It’s a conversation, as Sunflower states, “between me and me.” It allows the creative journal writer to discuss and address it—whatever it is—without judgment and pretense. The messiness of working through the entanglements of our internal thoughts, life experiences, and external symbols called words and images is welcomed and ecstatically encouraged. Journaling is a way “to get it out of your system! [The] journal is a perfectly appropriate place to express yourself— all of yourself” (Adams, 1990, p. 39), regardless of the present, or now, happenings of our lives. The woman rests and allows herself to just be in the sand, within the journal of her hands.

An Expression In The Sand

> Today the expressive arts are not the only ones open to women; many are essaying various creative activities. Woman’s situation inclines her to seek salvation in literature and art. …Taking an attitude of negation and denial, she is not absorbed in the real: she protects against it, with words. She seeks through nature for the image of her soul, she abandons herself to reveries, she wishes to attain her *being*—but she is doomed to frustration; she can recover if only in the region of the imaginary. (DeBeauvoir, 1949/1989, p. 704)

DeBeauvoir (1949/1989) asserts, “It is natural enough for woman to attempt escape from this world where she often feels slighted and misunderstood” (p. 707). Of course, unless death has called her home, the woman is not removed physically from the earth realm when escaping from this world. Instead, as discussed previously, she is moving within and between her own fluidity or ability to exist physically external outside

of herself, while simultaneously existing spiritually and mentally internally within herself.

"Within herself" is a phrase of wonder. It encompasses the spiritual and demands the mental. It is a state of being that requires commitment and focus, humanly understood only by the person who sits within her own moment to hear, or receive, from herself. It is an acknowledgment that she has assumed access to the portal, the gateway, or the entrance which illuminates her personal oasis. It is the space where expressive moments hail from her body, all nurtured through in-depth cultivation and construction not of this world but of her own. It is the process that allows her to dwell, to build, to express from within herself outside of herself in the malleable sand called her journal page, a creative vehicle.

> To prevent an inner life that has *no useful* purpose from sinking into nothingness, to assert herself against giving conditions which she bears rebelliously, to create a world other than that in which she fails to attain her being, she must resort to *self-expression*. Then, too, it is well known that she is a chatter and a scribbler; she unbosoms herself in conversations, in letters, in intimate diaries. …The vast leisure she enjoys is most favorable to such activities. (DeBeauvoir, 1949/1989, p. 704)

In this moment, Belle, Dianne, Marsha, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower internally open themselves to release external expressions in the sand, unfolding themselves in a creative journaling pause. Through self-expression etched out in the sand, or written in her personal journal, a woman lives.

Within each moment, the "sand is a character that has a role to play at every scale, both in the physical sense and in our collective imagination" (Welland, 2009, p. xiv). A woman lives not just for herself, but for others, embracing the knowledge that "there are worlds to see in a grain of sand, and countless grains to see in our world" (Welland, 2009,

p. xiv). For within the sand, she digs and detects a centering, a positioning used to create both an internal and an external foothold for her journey through the desert to and from the oasis.

A Woman Centering: Her Expressions In The Sand

> When I am centered, I feel connected to the very core of my being, where almost anything seems possible. I can more easily overcome my perceived limitations and better access my strengths. Sometimes I can merge with an activity in a state of flow; other times I discovered inner silence that weakens me to the sacred. But finding my center isn't easy. Life all too often has me running in circles around myself, rather than centering within myself. At those chaotic times, I try to remember that all circles have a center for which the concentric energies radiate. Then I try to find a quiet place of potential in myself by moving through my thoughts, feelings, and action until I arrived at the calm eye of the storm: my center. (London & Recio, 2004, p. 73)

Centering is a practice that is "helpful in the midst of strong emotional states such as excitement or anxiety, and is often used by athletes, public speakers, actors, and anyone who wants to feel stable and prepared before a potentially stressful event" (http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/centering). For all intents and purposes, this study recognizes the importance of being "fully conscious of [our] emotions" and being "able to feel them before [we] can feel that which lies beyond them" (Tolle, 1999, p. 29). As Tolle reminds, "Emotion literally means 'disturbance.' The word comes from the Latin *emovere*, meaning "to disturb" (p. 29), or agitate. Therefore, for this study, we embraced centering. This technique allowed the women to 1) acknowledge their emotions; 2) unearth, or seek and find, the source of agitation; and, 3) tap into the wisdom illuminated by their personal senses.

> On your life's journey, you wander along paths of seeking. The poetics of the senses help in your quest toward inner wisdom. Listen with the ears of the heart. See with the eyes of the mind. Seeking wisdom is a creative work. (Hieb, 2005, p. 21)

On two separate occasions, the women came together as a group—the first as an orientation to the creative journaling pause experience, and the second as a wrap-up to the experience. Each group session gave them space to honor themselves in the presence of others; and, in between the group sessions, the women participated in two individual sessions. Each individual session gave them space to honor themselves in the presence of themselves. In many ways, each session served as a centering, a moment of pause for the women to enter, accept, and rekindle a creative compassion—a compassion which acknowledges and authenticates each space of their presence to others, but most importantly, to themselves.

For the most part, each woman entered the room ready to participate in the activities of a creative journaling pause for each particular session. However, as anticipated, Belle, Dianne, Marsha, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower also arrived with curiosity, apprehension, and their own set of life's baggage. Even to those women who had previously engaged in creative journaling activities, these study sessions were filled with unknowns and hope-fors.

For instance, Sunflower gives a detailed description of her thought progression from her initial introduction to creative journaling to her involvement in the study. Each description helps to show how the centering ability of creative journaling allows her to acknowledge and accept a specific space she holds as an individual. First, Sunflower discusses the unknowns, those things which are unfamiliar or not previously identified as possibilities:

> See, when you first told me about creative journaling, I didn't see journaling as like diary writing, making lists, and all these other things. I just thought it was people writing their thoughts down and sharing those thoughts or people wrote their thoughts down and just kept them, so they could have this passage of time. I

> didn't really know the creative piece, where that came into play, until we went over the techniques. And, I was surprised when I showed up here and there were crayons and colored pencils (laughter). I was kind of taken aback (laughter). I really didn't know how to react. I was like: "Alright, you trust Sonya, so this is going to happen, I guess." Um, it took me awhile to be like, okay. I can see where this is going (laugher). Because, I was like: "I don't see a journal here. We are doing something with lots of crayons."

Even with her emotion of surprise, Sunflower relied on her feeling of trust to guide her through this experience. For the most part, *a priori* was at work in this incidence. Sunflower did not have any experience with creative journaling; however, she knew I did. Therefore, though apprehensive about her first creative journaling experience, she had confidence in her relationship with me that allowed her to continue the experience just by knowing I would not jeopardize her safety, or mine for that matter, intentionally. Instead, secondly, she stumbled to the side of her hope-fors, those things we move toward with a confident expectation of fulfillment. Resting in a feeling of trust, Sunflower immersed herself into the full experience of creating in the sand, using crayons to enhance her ability to express herself, "But I get it now, you know: Because creativity is different for everybody. … So, I see it now. I get it!"

In his novel *The Little Prince*, De Saint Exupéry (1943/1971) writes, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (p. 87). Trust is a manifested feeling felt within. Sunflower feels safe and confident; thus, she allows herself to go beyond her initial surprise. Even though she made a "guess" and stumbled to the side of her hope-fors, she made a conscious decision to move forward and participate completely in the creative journaling activities. The choice to move forward allowed her to center herself, which in turn allowed her to see herself, acknowledge herself, and be herself.

Like Sunflower, each woman entered the room and sat at a table along with her own barriers, or notions, of who she should be as an individual woman engaged in her own life. The barriers are those thoughts, feelings, and ideas that keep us from expressing the truth about who we are and/or how we feel. Yet, as Sunflower allowed herself to access the space of a creative journaling moment, she also became open to letting herself be without pretense. Creativeness is not general, but unique and specific to her person, as Sunflower exclaims, "Creativity is different for everybody." This "letting be" illuminated the various colors dispersed from her writing utensils, unfolding words and images into a colorful and, oftentimes, complex display of truth. Her expression is unlike anyone else. As Heidegger (1971) suggests, "…we are able to characterize creation as follows: to create is to cause something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth. The work's becoming a work is a way in which truth becomes and happens. It all rests on the nature of truth" (p. 60).

An expression of color.

For each woman, in her own moment of pause, color is personal. Color is obvious. Color is true to her thoughts of her experience. Color shines light on what is real and what is not. Color represents feelings and emotions.

> Color is an unavoidable part of our experience of the world, not the least as it differentiates and organizes the physical space in which we live, allowing us to navigate it. …We also think in (or, maybe better, with) color. Color marks our emotional and social existence. Our psychological states have color: we see red, feel blue, are tickled pink, and, not infrequently, are green with envy, particularly when confronted by those so tickled. (Kastan, 2018, p. 1)

For Sharron, her truth unfolded in three specific colors—black, red, and purple—as she took her time to move forward in the sand (see Appendix E). She was deliberately patient in choosing her colors, as each one spoke a distinct message to her. Each conjured up a

specific feeling as she navigated through the activities of the session. In her own voice, Sharron explains:

> Taking time and the colors—It was showing me the colors, how I was feeling during the stages of the assignment that I was doing. How I was feeling about family, grandparents, children and people and myself. That was the first time I ever did that though—just grabbing a crayon and just doing different things with different colors. I notice I did that today. Red, black, purple—those were my main ones. Red was the confusion, frustration and anger that people were putting upon me. Black was when I could not see because I was too much being angry. And, purple was compassion and love that only my grandmother gave me.

The colors disturbed Sharron just enough to allow her to see or come to know, associate, and embrace the feelings of her past. In having the space to take time to engage with colors, she was able to try something new and uncover the truth. Even when the experience of uncovering was difficult, she was determined to move forward.

> Determination—because even though I had those colors, I was still going through it, but I was still determined to get out of it. Because I wouldn't be able to see the purple, if I was going to be stuck in the red and black. So, not giving up on something that you know is better. Something that you know has a purpose. Something that you know I could receive [instead of] what I'm dealing with today. (Sharron) (see Appendix E)

Sharron's moving forward in her journey meant accepting a moment to receive information about herself for herself, despite what may be happening presently or may have happened in the past. Each pause gives her space in her life to examine each piece of it, one piece at a time, one color at a time.

> I have different colors. I have different ways. I have moments. I have issues. I have all these things. But it is okay to have because I can pause on each one and figure out or wait till the right time to get un-paused and just move further into the journeys I have to go to. So, the life and the map direct everything from the beginning to middle and to the end. (Sharron)

For Marsha, color allowed her to feel and become comfortable in the process of creating and expressing herself as she used familiar tools, like Crayola and glue. The

familiar tools conjured and reconnected her to the fondness of her childhood experience with art and crafts. This sentiment of fondness allowed her to participate fully, despite the disturbing effects of a structured or ordered time in which to create.

> … what I appreciated, honestly, was the fact that it was taking me back to childhood. You know, seeing the box of 64 Crayola crayons on the desk [group sounds of agreement]. I was like "alright now" [group laughter]. And, I was looking for my color, which is not in the box anymore. But having this tactile experience, you know, I felt like we were going back to kindergarten. We had our scissors and newspaper paper [group laughter]. And, I thought: And, where's the glue? [group laughter] When you said, collage. I was like, where's the glue? [continued group laughing] So, you know, those tactile moments, and, then the ability to reflect on how we felt as children doing arts and crafts in the classroom with our friends. ...I loved it. So, even though [the structure of] going from A to Z put a little pressure, the tools were familiar tools [group agreement]. I think if you would have brought something completely foreign to us, in order to express ourselves, that would have been really too stressful. A new tool and time. But old friendly things, like the glue stick. It's purple now, what!? [group laughter]

It was not until Marsha participated in this creative journaling pause that she was re-awakened to the excitement of a box of crayons and a glue stick. The use of color awakens the parts of us that are often asleep due to the daily, day-to-day things of our lives.

Yet, on the other hand, for Dianne, color was all about nature and embracing the beautiful variety of shades in the rainbow that God gave to the world. Initially, though, she hesitated to express her admiration for the rainbow due to the norm of today's culture.

> An image of how I feel now is like colors. It's like, I just draw all kinds of colors—every color. It's sad that you can't just use the rainbow like you want to because of how the rainbow is used for now. I mean: You're almost afraid to say a rainbow symbol. But I'm like, I see colors—like colors everywhere, like all the colors.

Thus, to insure her creative journaling pause space stayed true to her being, Dianne was encouraged to continue in her train of thought of what colors meant to her, even though

she was afraid of being misidentified and misunderstood in today's culture.

Around the world, the rainbow flag—created and revealed by Gilbert Barker in 1978—is a symbol of solidarity within the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community (https://www.history.com/news/how-did-the-rainbow-flag-become-an-lgbt-symbol). However, as explained in an interview with the Museum of Modern Art (2015), Barker's inspiration for developing the flag makes it even more plain for why encouraging Dianne to continue her train of thought was important.

> I decided that we should have a flag, that a flag fit us as a symbol, that we are a people, a tribe if you will. And flags are about proclaiming power, so it's very appropriate. … It was necessary to have the Rainbow Flag because up until that we had the pink triangle from the Nazis—it was the symbol that they would use [to denote gay people]. It came from such a horrible place of murder and holocaust and Hitler. We needed something beautiful, something from us. The rainbow is so perfect because it really fits our diversity in terms of race, gender, ages, all of those things. Plus, it's a natural flag—it's from the sky! … Our job as gay people was to come out, to be visible, to live in the truth as I say, to get out of the lie. A flag really fit that mission, because that's a way of proclaiming your visibility, or saying, "This is who I am!"
> https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2015/06/17/moma-acquires-the-rainbow-flag/

Dianne's intention for the discussion of the rainbow was to embrace a biblical promise of peace God made to Noah with the appearance of the rainbow. When discussing her fear of embracing the rainbow, Dianne allowed color to shed light on her intention for using it. Encouraging her to reclaim the rainbow allows accord—a consensus, or a point of harmony with her faith and the thing that brings her hope. Within the lived spaces of the world, the rainbow is a positive symbol for many. Dianne reclaiming the rainbow for herself is important to living her truth, and/or saying, "This is who I am!" The rainbow is symbol of how she feels and how it inspires her.

> Because the rainbow is God's. …alright, yes, so, I reclaim it for myself. Because for me it's a promise. It's hope. It's brightness.

This information about her affinity or attraction to the rainbow made it clear why the white space and skipped blank pages upset Dianne. Any colorless space or page left in the journal was a disturbance to Dianne. She was disturbed by the non-color.

> Because I love color, it was so much fun to go back and be like: Ah, blank pages! And, just add color. And, maybe to add more color to something we had already done. … it was really just a great experience. I enjoy it. …Because of the color piece, it's hard for me. What upset me was that I was looking through the journal and I was like, Oh gosh! We had to skip a page! And, it was like; it was something about seeing that blank white page. And, I was like: I love color. I think, throughout my life, it has always been hard for me because I'm artistic. (see Appendix F)

So, it makes sense that Dianne felt a certain kind of way when she thought of the rainbow—the beautiful array of natural colors—as a symbol no longer available to her (see Appendix F). As an artist, Dianne talks as though she is one with color. Each basic color is mentioned as a family, each of which she likes.

> And, when people would say, "Hey, Dianne, what's your favorite color?" Even as a child, I struggled with that. I couldn't really pick one because I [Dianne chuckles] I love all of them. It's too many colors that I love. I love colors in the red family; I love colors in the blue family; the yellow family. And, love—I love color; our world is colorful. And, when I look around at everything God created, color makes me happy. Of course, I love your basic black and white. I think those colors are really pretty together. And, you know: I just love those colors. But I just love, **I just love** having an array of colors to choose from. And, I like making things colorful and bright and bold and cheery. I think it makes me happy. Color is soothing to me too. Color is soothing. Some combinations of color are soothing.

The good thing is, Dianne never has to choose a specific color. Being true to herself means, at times, defying the odds and embracing who she is even when she is afraid. Her discussion of color interwove itself into thoughts about being who she was, regardless of being identified as a maverick—or not.

> I read a book in seminary that talked about mavericks; and, it was telling preachers not to stifle the mavericks in your congregation. Because they don't—we don't—think the same way. I don't see things the same way you do. I don't

> think the same way you do. And, it's like, you look at us as being crazy; and, we're not. …And, I think that I was so scared … I don't know though, in a way. Like I said, one day I'm just going to start dressing. Because I do have some styles, some ideas about how I want to come outside [adorning the different colors].

Similarly, as each woman engaged in the sand, the journal in her hands, she changed focus and began to concentrate on who she is instead of who she should be or who she is not. In some way, this way of turning and focusing seem to have fed their determination. Therefore, the first task is precious, or vital, to getting participants centered in the space of the present now.

> Why is it the most precious thing? Firstly, because it is the only thing. It's all there is. The eternal present is the space within which your whole life unfolds, the one factor that remains constant. Life is now. There was never a time when your life was not now, nor will there ever be. Secondly, the Now is the only point that can take you beyond the limited confines of the mind. It is your only point of access into the timeless and formless realm of Being. (Tolle, 2004, p. 49)

For this reason, each session included activities that centered the participants as individuals in a group of women who were focusing and channeling themselves toward answering the question "Who am I?" The activities were pivotal in how the women stayed centered during the study and how they might continue the creative journaling process after the study.

For the most part, through my conversations with the women, I have come to learn that the interesting thing about a creative journaling pause is this: The journey continues to be about having a moment to feel and write the expression of our internal thoughts made external, but also, most importantly it is just—a simple movement—to find what is lost, loose or to let go of what is found, align with God, and/or prepare for what is new. It is allowing the journal, the writing, and the space of a creative moment to converge into a life disrupting hiatus that meshes the past, present, and future into one.

The old becomes immersed in the new and the new becomes immersed in the old; something is found, let go, aligned and/or prepared.

An expression of lost and found.

> I feel like I've just gotten to a place where I know who I am again, and I get worried that I'm going to lose … sorry, I'm starting to cry …I get worried that I'm going to lose sight of that. (Sunflower)

During our second conversation, Sunflower fought back tears as she discussed being in a place of knowing herself again. She was no longer what writer and social activist Gloria Steinman calls a female impersonator, a girl or woman who assumes the feminine roles defined by society. She was no longer listening to the "they," those individuals who intentionally or unintentionally steer us away from listening to ourselves as discussed in chapter one. She was no longer entangled in listening away (Heidegger, 1962) because the part of herself that can wonder about its own existence—*Dasein* (van Manen, 1997) was now refocused and listening to itself.

> … *Dasein*, as a Being-with which understands, can *listen* to Others. Losing itself in the publicness and the idle talk of the "they", it *fails to hear [überhört*] its own Self in listening to the they-self. If *Dasein* is to be able to get brought back from this lostness of failing to hear itself, and if this is to be done through itself, then it must first be able to find itself—to find itself as something which has failed to hear itself, and which fails to hear in that it *listens away* to the "they". This listening-away must get broken off; in other words, the possibility of another kind of hearing which will interrupt it, must be given by *Dasein* itself. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 315)

Without self-reproach, Sunflower had "to deepen [her] own self-understanding by becoming free from traditional prejudices" (Escudero, 2014, p. 6). However, this realization was not a stand-alone. Like so many other women, Sunflower realized she had lost several aspects of her personality, those things that define her as a human being and as co-creator of her life. As Sunflower acknowledged knowing herself again, she also

experienced loss—those things about herself that had been misplaced over the years.

> Especially to me, I feel a sense of loss and didn't even realize that until we did the activity where I was doing the writing of the letter to myself and the timeline. Because when I was looking at all the things that happened, and you asked me in what period during that time I was doing creative journaling. …and, when I was looking at the big gaps, I was wondering like what happened? And just taking the time to look back on it, like, why was I at that age writing and creating and doing all these things and after I became more educated and had a more worldwide view, that I just lose that and just looking back, I know I'm realizing that I lost this part of myself because I kept it, I pushed it back, I kept it down. And, it … I guess it went away because it was no longer needed or it was treated like it was no longer needed, and now I feel that sense of loss and whether or not I will ever get that back—that desire to create and share stories and tell, you know, be that expressive person.

Sunflower accepts reality—a loss of self has occurred over the years as she interacted with the external forces of the world, the others. Now, with the they-self quieted as she participates in a creative journaling experience, she has a moment to pause in a non-judgmental space and feel—feel the loss. The beauty is as Viorst (1986/1998) asserts, "A sense of reality also lets us assess our self and the world with relative accuracy. Accepting reality means that we've come to terms with the world's—and our own—limitations and flaws. It also means establishing achievable goals for ourselves, compromises and substitutes …" (p. 169). The acceptance often helps us prepare for seeking further that which we lost and/or have yet to achieve.

An expression of preparation.

> Life is supposed to be a series of adventures. Think of this trip itself. On some difficult days, we cross the desert for what seems like forever. Time moves almost reluctantly – slowly, and heavily, as if weighed down by the heat of the sun and mired in the sand. On other days, we may catch a refreshing breeze, and even be at a delightful oasis like this one. … We tell stories. … We read. We enjoy ourselves. Time is different. The days here can pass far too quickly. But they prepare us well for the next stretch of travel. (Morris, 2015, pp. 2-3)

Preparation is a process that occurs in the beginning or at the end of an experience

or event. From the Latin word *praeparationem*, it is defined as an "act of preparing" and "a making ready" (https://www.etymonline.com/). It can be a course of development that makes an indelible, or unforgettable, lifetime marker on one event; or, it can be a continual progression making several indelible marks on several lifetime events. Either way, the key is that the indelibleness of each event serves as a catalyst to propel everyone, in this case each woman, into the next phase or phases of her life. She is not concerned with how or when it will happen, but she is dutifully, unquestionably, and devotedly open to the possibilities that may unfold as she continues to travel through life "preparing" and "making ready."

For Sharron and Belle, the creative journaling pauses of this study opened spaces for them to imagine, consider, and/or reconsider the next phase of their lives, respectively. Possibilities, new opportunities, and potentialities were unearthed in the sand beneath their hands. Neither of the women stated knowing the future or pretended to know the future, but both of them indicated feeling (and continuing to feel) that their present stance, or present posture in life, is always preparing them for what is to come in the near and distant future. As discussed in chapter one, *Dasein* is the aspect of our humanness that has the capability to wonder and inquire about its own existence (van Manen, 1997); and, this aspect of ourselves "always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 33).

For the most part, as Heidegger asserts, "*Dasein* has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular *Dasein* decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by

neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself" ((Heidegger, 1962, p. 33). For all the women, the events of their future are somehow connected to an event or events that exist in their present (or their past) to conjure up anticipations or expectations of the possible. Consequently, a woman's decision to either take hold or neglect possibilities is simply a part of the creative journaling pause process of movement through expression. Within this process, an expression of preparation manifests in one of two phases—trekking and tracking.

Each phrase has a different meaning for the movement of one's preparation. For instance, in short, yet concise conversations, each woman used specific words to discuss their moment of preparation. Sharron describes "going to the potter's wheel;" and Belle reveals "the pathway." Each woman walks (or creatively journals) in the desert sands—exposing the less traveled (or thought about) areas of her life on paper, in the external. Sharron is trekking *through* the sand and Belle is tracking *in* the sand. These are two distinct and pertinent phases of an expression of preparation.

Trekking as an expression of preparation. During her first individual creative journaling session, Sharron specified that journaling is an instrumental way for her to hear and align herself with God's will for her life. For the most part, the other women made this point as well. However, Sharron was the only one who gave a vivid example of her being molded and shaped by God on a potter's wheel as discussed in Scripture (see Appendix G).

> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, "Can I not

> do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel." (KJV, Jeremiah 18: 1-6)

Like Jeremiah, Sharron makes the trek to the potter's house when summoned. By trekking to the potter's house, she prepares herself for what is to come. From the Dutch word *trekken,* trekking means "to march, journey;" and, from the Middle Dutch word *trecken,* it means "to draw, pull" https://www.etymonline.com/). For Sharron, God's call to her came through the reading of Scripture. The call "draws" or "pulls" her to "march" or "journey" to a place in her mind in which she allows herself to experience a spiritual, or divine type of intervention, as a way to prepare for the change of course that is about to occur in her life.

> And, it's always really, now, it's mostly what God has me to say to people. It's not my saying anymore. It's…when I'm reading my Bible, I can always tell when it's time for me to go back on the potter wheel. When he's getting ready to prepare me for the next journey he puts me on the wheel. How do I know it's time to get on that wheel? [I know] because when I open the Bible, Jeremiah 18:1-6 pops up. It doesn't pop up often. But, now, when it pops up, I say, "Okay. I got to go back on the wheel. What's going on?" He says, "Sharron, go down to the potter's house." (Sharron)

For Sharron, the practice of Bible reading is a movement that involves an encounter with God. God is the potter; and she is the clay. For all intents and purposes, the thought of her getting on a potter's wheel implies a type of anticipated molding or shaping. The clay does not mold and/or shape itself. Instead, it surrenders to the sculpturing and detailing of the potter's hands—specifications fortified, and the excess removed. Sharron assumes the position of clay.

> So, I know when I open the Bible and that comes up, I say, "Okay, here I go again. I got to get back on that wheel." Whatever he has prepared for me to do, he is preparing me to do. That means: He's strengthening me. He's removing whatever he wants to remove. …and, I am in the unknown when I go to this potter house. …It can be writing for me. It can be writing for whatever he wants me to put in the book. Sometimes, he—when I read Jeremiah—sometimes [though] the

> book I'm working on, he would lead me to that person that I'm getting ready to write about. …He wants me to write something to them.

For Sharron, though the molding is anticipated and expected, this encounter with God is unpredictable; the molding outcome is neither predictable nor known. When Sharron surrenders to the call of the wheel, she surrenders herself pliable, flexible, workable, and usable to whatever possibilities come to her life. For her, in this moment of writing in her creative journal, or as she calls it "the book," the disturbing aspect of change is doable and accepted. Change is only disturbing because it disrupts the current trekking in the sand; it is not necessarily negative or positive, but it is inevitable. As Sharron reads the Bible, she sits to hear. As she sits to hear, she is prompted to write. As she writes, Sharron feels she is divinely molded and prepared to walk out her next steps.

Tracking as an expression of preparation.

> Now, the definition of a track in Australia is a mark made across the landscape by the repeated passage of a vehicle or, if you are very lucky, initially by a bulldozer. These tracks vary in quality from a corrugated, bull-dust-covered, well-defined and well-used road to something which you can barely discern by climbing a hill and squinting in the general direction you think the said track may go. … The track may wind around or over hills and ridges and rocky outcroppings, straight into sand-dunes, get swallowed up by sandy creek-beds, get totally lost in stony creek-beds, or fray into a maze of animal pads. Following tracks is most often easy, sometimes frustrating, and occasionally downright terrifying. (Davidson, 1980, pp. 111-112)

As Belle spoke about her creative journaling experiences, I was reminded of Davidson's definition of a track. For Belle, creative journaling shows and allows her to see an already existing pathway, a trail of what has already been established or, in her words, "accomplished." It is not a way to define, find, or clarify her dreams, but instead a way to see and be shown. Even when I asked a follow-up question to that effect, Belle adamantly responds, "No, the journaling shows the pathway. And, I always say, it shows

the preparation for the next thing that's coming, that I think might be coming. I don't know, that could possibly be coming." In a sense for Belle, creative journaling shows the footprints of her life through the sand, illuminating the tracks that trace back to where she has come. In the moments of pausing and taking stock of her life, Belle gives an example of what she notices about who she is as an individual—a person looking to someday getting married and/or to travel and live abroad.

> For example, I say I know one day, I guess, I'm going to get married. So, why is it, and I ask myself, this question all the time, especially when I'm cooking. I'm like Lord, why do you have me cooking all these, not exotic, but all these meals and you know, like I'm preparing for a family. It's only me! Why am I cooking all this stuff? It's just like it comes natural. It's not like, "Oh my God, I got to go home and cook some spaghetti or cook, you know, do this or do that." It's just like okay, just like a homemaker. Just like a woman of the house, if that's your role. You know: You have to think—What is the family going to eat for dinner tonight? And I'm like, why is this happening like everyday? … I might think at 8 o'clock in the morning, I want to eat fish for dinner at 5 o'clock. And, I think to the European way of life, because that's what they do. They plan out in the morning; they go to the market; and, they eat it in the evening. And, it's fresh. It's fresh. So, that could be preparation for when I go. I'm already in my mind; I already know this is the way of life. You got to eat like this. This is how it goes. (Belle) (See Appendix H)

From the Old French word *trac,* tracks means "footprint, mark left by anything." https://www.etymonline.com/). Food preparation and cooking have always been a part of Belle's life history. Each is a footprint or mark of her past, which helps her to navigate the present and possible future. From her perspective, food preparation and cooking are a form of journaling.

> Cooking is definitely my second form of therapy. Sewing is therapy. All the things that I do, are, you know, in some sense my pause. Those are the things that I enjoy doing; and, I don't get distracted when I'm doing them. They come very easy. It's not like a struggle, you know, I can't really get this stitch or I can't cook this meal. Because it's funny, sometimes I read recipes, sometimes I don't. It's just what I feel like eating that day. I just put it together, and I'm like: "Oh, that tastes good." I look at the other things I do, like cooking. I look at those type of things as a kind of a journaling for me. Having to physically write down and all,

> that's not. That's not me. But I look at cooking and hair, those things, in a sense to me, are my type of journaling.

Like Belle, Elbow (1998) writes, "Cooking is the interaction of contrasting or conflicting material" (p. 48) and "one of the functions of a diary is to create interaction between you and symbols on paper" (p. 56). Furthermore, he explains:

> I try in what follows to specify various kinds of interaction that are important in writing. But in any of them cooking consists of the process of one piece of material (or one process) being transformed by interacting with another: one piece of material being seen through the lens of another, being dragged through the guts of another, being reoriented or reorganized in terms of the other, being mapped onto the other. (Elbow, 1998, p. 49)

For Belle, the tracking of her cooking experiences allowed her to map the various markings of the interactions with herself and the food prepared to the possibilities, or openings, of what may come in her life. Food and cooking have always played a key role in how she interacted and cared for others and herself.

> So, yeah, I look at it as maybe, um, preparation for whatever is getting ready to come. I don't know if it's going to be a husband, a family, some foster kids, I don't know. I don't know what's it's going to be. …Because I have always cooked, I have always cooked ever since college. I was the one cooking on a hot plate when we weren't supposed to. I was the one telling everyone, okay, we're going to the grocery store today; we're going to have spaghetti night tonight. You got to get the box of spaghetti; you have to get the sauce. You have to get the meat. I've always told everybody. If you ask any of my friends from college, they will tell you that. Always, I was the one cooking cube steak and chicken livers. I was the one doing stuff like that; and, they were looking at me like, "How do you know how to do that?" I don't know. I just thought of it. It just was. I've always done that. (Belle)

Tracking in the sand has helped Belle to pinpoint cooking as an important and influential element of her life. Various aspects of her life have been influenced by cooking in the past. Yet, Belle believes that the various experiences of cooking in life were not just for remembering the past, but for learning how to handle the things to come in the future. As Morris (2017) asserts, "You'll never meet the next step along the way to

your best path without sufficient preparation, whether it initially seems to you that you've been prepared enough or not" (p. 41).

> You'll feel it in your heart. It's that simple. Everything in you, and in your journey on this earth up until then, will have prepared you for meeting whatever is to be your future, or at least the next stage of your future. When it greets you, you'll recognize it as a good friend already. (Morris, 2017, p. 41)

An expression of rest.

> With our eyes wide open to God's goodness, our wonder returns, our gratitude is rehabilitated and our soul can find a place of rest in the present. What might it be like for us to simply pull out a lawn chair, sit down and rest in God's presence at the crossroads of this present moment? Can we surrender enough to relax and enjoy God's love? (Cepero, 2008, p. 101)

A creative journaling pause is rest. From the German *rast,* rest is defined as "peace, repose, and league of miles" (https://www.etymonline.com/). From the Gothic *rasta*, it is defined as a "mile," "stage of a journey," and the "distance between two resting places" (https://www.etymonline.com/). Both of these definitions help us to gain insight into the importance of the spiritual sense of the word rest. The spiritual rest situates the human being in the presence of the divine where there is peace and a healthy distance between where she rests in the physical and where she rests in the spirit.

From a spiritual sense, "we are told to …rest in the loving arms of our Lord" (Cameron, 2000, p. 22), as it is often described as a form of peace, submission, refuge, and love within the Bible. It is a point of reference where a person can feel everything but feel nothing at all. The conflict is real, and, yet, the undercurrent is hopeful. It is the place where God is at the helm of one's life, and rest in Him is joy.

> If God is the center point that defines the circle of our lives, we can think of the spiritual journey as the process by which the center becomes accessible and familiar to us. When we have a strong connection to God within, when we are on intimate terms with our intuition, when we have a strong and inspiring image of the Divine, we trust that our life is guided by the highest principles. We feel that

> life has meaning and purpose and that we are taking part in the cocreation of a better more beautiful world. (Borysenko, 1999, p. 130)

For the women of this study, resting in God plays a key role in their lives. As Christians, the Scriptures and their faith set the parameter of their morality. Coupled with individual experience and aspects of the divinity, the persons of the Holy Trinity—God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—were mentioned at some point during our conversations, either in group or individually. The women were free to speak as needed. They were able to relay their personal experience without filters or disclaimers, while speaking about broad to specific individual life experiences. On some levels, this type of vulnerability can be both frightening and intimidating as both the speaker and the listener sort through the information shared.

Even though each person has a basic understanding of what it means to be creative, Christian, and/or woman, the way a person experiences and lives one's artistry, faith, and gender is mostly personal and relative. On the one hand, each woman lives within the parameters of a Christian biblical doctrine. On the other hand, each woman has a unique personal relational experience with the divine. Therefore, it was not a surprise when three of the women spoke about a personal aspect of their relationship with God—their rest in Him. Within the stages of each of the women's life journey, Orchid discusses her rest in God's presence; Dianne reveals her rest in God's love; and, Marsha discloses her rest in God's sovereignty.

The sand as prayer to connect with God.

> Peace.
> Disruption.
> Pause to reflect and receive.
> God's wisdom comes through.
> (Orchid, 2017, Journal Entry)

Even when journaling, Orchid is mindful of her devotion to the divine (see Appendix I). Creative journaling is a way, or course of action, for Orchid to communicate with God, hear from God, and continuously develop her relationship with God. The journal is the place where she dwells to commune with the divine; it is an expression of admiration as she rests in the presence of God. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, she usually incorporates prayer in her journaling experiences. Using the creative movement of her hands, she engages in conversations with God and/or with herself about God. Prayer situates her in a position to talk to God.

> When I'm journaling, prayer is inter-dispersed all throughout. When I'm writing, and even drawing, I think it is like a prayer. … It's like praying. It's like having a conversation, talking to God. Listening for his answers and being totally honest with Him about whatever is on my mind and heart. (Orchid)

Cyzewski (2015) writes, "Prayer is often a posture communicating reverence and a commitment to be present as much as it's a two-way conversation" (p. 51). In Latin, the word *conversari*, or conversation, means "to live, dwell, live with, keep company with" (https://www.etymonline.com). In the mid-14th century, the word conversation was defined as the "place where one lives or dwells," the "general course of actions or habits," and the "manner of conducting oneself in the world" (https://www.etymonline.com).

> Prayer is an expression of mankind's unity and relationship of love with God. Prayer is an expression of mankind's affirmation of and participation in God's purposes for the earth. Prayer is the involvement of oneself (one's whole self) with God. (Munroe, 2002, pp. 35-36)

For Orchid, journaling opens pathways for her to pray; and, as she states, it becomes "the motivation to work on and strengthen my relationship with the Lord" (see Appendix I). Prayer is a dialog, an exchange. Munroe (2002) suggests, "To pray means to commune

with God, to become one with God" (p. 35). Prayer is a way to share and communicate with God. It is a conversation with the divine. It is one of the ways in which Orchid dwells and opens herself to the presence of God, resting and knowing that she is cared for and heard.

Prayer is an integral part of Orchid's journaling process. As Orchid writes, she is actively listening with the expectation of receiving an epiphany:

> Creative Journaling allows for that quiet time when I can hear His voice more clearly, without the distractions of the radio, video, or people at work or whatever. It's like talking to a friend one-on-one as opposed to talking to a friend in the middle of a supermarket while you're getting your groceries off the shelf. So, my prayers are usually more focused. When I write them out, they are more focused; and, it's easier for me to weave Scripture in because I'll actually pause. I'll think: There's a Scripture related to this; and, I'll look something up, whatever, and write it into the prayer. (see Appendix J)

The creative journaling process is an accentuation of a pause, a moment to digress and the space to indulge one's self in that digression. It allows an aside from noise and distractions of day-to-day routine to be able to hear his voice more clearly. For Orchid, the digression allows a focused rendition of her communication with God. Sensitivity and specificity are the norm. God speaks to her; Orchid speaks to Him. Language unfolds a friendship yielding to the personable exchange of words between two persons—one mortal, the other divine—sitting in the presence of the other.

What is this I write?
A connected Scripture comes—
lotus flower blooms.
(S. Riley, 2019)

The sand as inspiration.

> Artists throughout the centuries have spoken of "inspiration," confiding that God spoke to them or angels did. In our age, such notions of art as a spiritual experience are seldom mentioned. And yet, the central experience of creativity is mystical. Opening our souls to what must be made, we meet our Maker. …As artists, we experience the fact that 'God is in the details.' Making our art, we make artful lives. Making our art, we meet firsthand the hand of our Creator. (Cameron, 2016, pp. 231)

Dianne has found a rest in God through her creativity. Her rest is an inspiration that stems from her awareness that she is special, gifted in the arts. During the 1300s, the word inspiration was defined as an "immediate influence of God or a god." In Latin, the word is derived from *inspirare*, which means to "blow into" or "breathe upon" (https://www.etymonline.com/). For Dianne, her artistic abilities are bestowed by God; and, her inspiration comes not only from God, but from others as well (positive people and things), allowing her to bring to life, or breathe upon, her creative inventions. It is this creativity that grounds her in who she is as an individual, despite the negativity of her past.

> Growing up I was pretty unsure of myself. I was awkward, shy, and, um, people tend to label you. And, you kind of grow up with those labels. It's like you can either accept it—it's like a part of you does expect it and part of you doesn't. But I think it was the creative part of me that allowed me not to accept everything negative that people said about me. Then, being able to think of Who am I. It's like it takes you back to the life you start reminiscing about. And, then, thinking about the negative things people have said. It's like that thing rises up in you—Who am I? I choose to believe that part of things that God has shown me over the years—that you're creative, talented, um, that you are beautiful despite the world telling you that you are not by their world standards. (Dianne)

Cepero (2008) writes, "Sometimes a friend or a counselor or a spiritual director listens until we actually hear ourselves and see the shape of our own story" (pp. 43-44). The creative journal is like that friend that allows you to be present in your now, past, and, at

times, future. The creative part of Dianne gives her the external release to think and remember (to journal), but also to redefine and rediscover.

> I think of the people [God] has put into my life who have told me positive things about myself. And, when I really sit down and think about who I am, it's like: I could write down something negative, but the positive seems more in my spirit when I think of who am I [while creative journaling]. (Dianne)

In the middle of one of Dianne's creative journaling pages, she placed an eye, enlarged pupils drawn within a heart (See Appendix K). During a conversation, she explains, "The big eye … represented that God was always watching me; and, he always saw me." For Dianne, this understanding of God being present in her life, especially in moments of creativity is quite prevalent throughout her journaling and discussions. For instance, Dianne pronounces, "… I think the creative journaling is something that can get you even closer connected to God; and, I think it can be a great devotional thing." In a way, her assertion highlights a sense of relationship between herself and God. She has a willingness—a willingness to spend time in His presence. Yet, she also has an admiration for His willingness to spend time in hers. It is a grounding based in love, fortifying her to Him, but also fortifying who she is to herself. In other words, God's unconditional love for her taught her how to know and love herself.

> Sometimes, we take in all the negative people say about you. Sometimes, it gets to be overwhelming. So, you have to remind yourself about that positive things about yourself and good things about yourself. Those are the things that God loves about you. That's the fun in it. It's like getting to know yourself. Really getting to know yourself. And, reminding yourself: "Hey, you are kindhearted. You're generous. You're empathic. You're beautiful. You're wonderful." Yes, that's what creative journaling does for me. (Dianne)

In many ways, the journal is "a spiritual friend and counselor, urging you to say more, tell it all and in the retelling uncover the outlines of your own life—who you are, who your people are, where you have been and where you are headed" (Cepero, 2008, pp. 43-

44). For Dianne, the creative journal created a light in the darkness that followed her. Without specifically stating the specific incidents, she gives vivid pictures of the hovering darkness.

> I would have to say a dark cloud [hovers] when I reminisce, to an extent, because I think it takes me back. I start with the negative things that I've dealt with and how I've had to strive to—the positive things I think about myself, I know are there. When I start reminiscing, there's a dark cloud that comes, that's the image I get, because I've thought so hard to fight through and strive through and push through that dark into what I feel now about myself. (Dianne)

As Dianne finishes her point, she associates creative journaling with the colorful aspects of nature, "How I feel now is, like, colors. I just draw all kind of colors" (see Appendix K). The activity of creative journaling allowed her the ability to create beyond the element of displeasure of her past. The vibrancy and illuminating elements of light were the breath to blow a new perspective into her life and gave her the ability to move forward. In addition, she mentioned the use of a creative utensil that helped to open her creative eye in a childlike manner.

> It's like the chalk … it's like the way … it's like the way you could blend it, the way the colors blended together. It reminded me of the things in nature. It reminded me of sunsets, and sunrises and how the colors blend together in the sky. The beauty in nature is really inspiring to me; and, the color chalk, it kind of reminded me of how beautiful things, color and nature, blend together. And, that was a part of the refreshing in that creative journaling experience for me. That simple tool of colored chalk. You know: I loved that and I'm really—when I say I was getting happy and being giddy like a little kid with finger paint. That's how I felt with that chalk. So, I'm so happy that you introduced me to that. (Dianne)

The creative journaling gave Dianne opportunities to tap into various pieces of herself. As she allowed herself to tap into those pieces, she also allowed herself to tap into the love of God, which also allowed her to assist others in knowing their own ability to rise above the darkness in their lives.

> … I feel that I am successful. Intelligent is another word that comes to mind for who am I. And, also, a child of God; and, I'll say royalty. …Considerate, empathic. You know what else to mind too, I didn't write it. I didn't think about that when I was doing that exercise earlier, but another word that comes to mind when I say who am I: I think underdog too. All my life, I've always felt like the underdog; and, I had to rise above. I think that's why I relate to people; I feel like underdogs—they feel so less than others. I feel like I got to push them. I got to encourage them, be like you can do it. (Dianne)

Journaling is an array of life experiences that tell the whole story of who we are as individuals. Cepero (2008) writes, the "journal is a place to meet your particular life and befriend it" (p.45). For Dianne, the journal is space for her to discuss the positive and negative aspects of her life in the open:

> [A creative journaling pause] makes me feel secure, secure in myself. It also makes me feel happy because I feel like I'm really embracing myself the way God sees me when I'm creative journaling. It makes me feel secure. I feel secure when I embrace and know for myself that God accepts me for who I am; and, it makes me feel secure to know I'm accepted; and, that I'm loved in spite of anything. That I'm loved, that I am. (Dianne)

As Dianne befriends various aspects of herself, she is tapping into a mechanizing power to move forward. In accepting herself, she is making way to befriend herself to believe in herself. Through creative journaling, Dianne is inspired to embrace herself.

The sand as Sabbath.

> Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. (KJV, Leviticus 23)
>
> For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. (KJV, Matthew 12:8)
> So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (KJV, Colossians 2:16-17)

Like breathing, rest is essential to life. Without a proper supply of either one, our ability to function as earthly beings is impaired. This impairment causes a depletion, which sparks an imbalance and/or demise of some type. Our mental, spiritual, and

physical potential is threatened as it becomes difficult to perform day-to-day tasks due to the exhaustion, stress, and tension of spreading ourselves too thin. Spreading ourselves thin is like taking an unconscious approach to living; we rather push ourselves beyond limits then take a moment to crave space for rest. Northrup (2010) highlights, "Our entire society functions in ways that keep us out of touch with what we know and feel. Remaining unconscious about our innate needs takes an enormous emotional and physical toll on our bodies and spirits" (p. 14).

> Not acknowledging our needs for rest, intimacy, touch, good nutrition, acknowledgment, and so on—and not knowing how to get these needs met directly—prevents us from being connected with our inner guidance. This disconnection, in turn, keeps us in a state of pain that increases the longer we deny it. It takes a lot of energy to stay out of touch with our needs. (Northup, 2010, pp. 14-15)

Fortunately, Marsha recognizes her need to rest. However, despite the recognition, she is in a wrestling match with herself, "The thing is: I guess my struggle for right now is giving myself permission to take it [a pause]—the competing interests, the time constraints, and then establishing it as something that is valuable." As mentioned earlier, this struggle to allow oneself the ability to open space to pause is real. The realness can be debilitating.

> …yesterday I was struggling with the Sabbath. I know what the Sabbath is; and, I know out of Judaism, when the Sabbath is. And, I also know that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath so the Sabbath can be any day of the week, right? Yet, I find myself back there [struggling to rest] because I'm saying to myself, Lord, one of the reasons I know I'm off balance right now is because I have not kept Sabbath. And, it wasn't just a suggestion for me. It was command. (Marsha)

In order to completely address the issue, Marsha brought the topic of her struggle back to the foundation of her faith. This acknowledgement and need for guidance opened space for her to address her own need and understanding of rest. For Marsha, God is the

initiator and example of how and what it means to rest, “He rested. He sat back and considered that thing, and he had fellowship with what he created.” Her comments stemmed from the story found in Scripture.

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ...Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (KJV, Genesis 1 &2)

This Scripture keeps Marsha grounded and conscious about her need for rest. Marsha understands that she is susceptible to becoming mentally, spiritually, and/or physically incapable to perform day-to-day tasks if she does not rest. Taking a breather, taking a rest, is imperative to her well-being.

> I might have to be creative every week. Trusting that there will be the unction [or deep feeling]. It’s like: I feel like I’m off. Okay, what do I need to do? It’s not contingent on the external. It’s really what’s going on in the side, tapping into that. I’m not restful. Lord, use whatever medium that I’m coming in contact with on today, to help me deal with why I am not peaceful. … Sabbath is the 24-hour period that I’m not dedicating to anything else except that which is Godly and/or rest. (Marsha)

Shirer (2015) asserts, “The primary purpose of Sabbath margins—of saying no, when appropriate—is to diminish our devotion to all other suitors and crystallize our allegiance to God” (p. 143). From the Hebrew word *shabbath*, Sabbath is a "day of rest” (https://www.etymonline.com). Yet, through her creative journaling pause, Marsha recognized that there is a propensity to make rest a type of work, “Now, the thing that I particularly see as an issue or problem is that sometimes we inadvertently start making things work, and make the creative journaling process—now it’s a law in my head as work and now it is no longer enjoyable.” Thus, we must be prepared to re-center ourselves back to the purpose of the Sabbath, as Marsha explains, “If it’s a place where it

is not peaceful, the only place to get peace is from the Prince of Peace."

> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given …and his name shall be called … The Prince of Peace. (KJV, Isaiah 9:6)

For Marsha, the Prince of Peace is one of the persons represented in the Godhead of her Christian faith—Jesus. In chapter three, he is described as the man known as the son of God. Like his father in the Old Testament of the Bible, Jesus offers rest in the New Testament of the Bible. In a way, when Marsha returns to the Prince of Peace, she is finding and setting her Sabbath margins, the lines or boundaries that will help her get the rest she needs (see Appendix L).

> At that time Jesus answered and said, …Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (KJV, Matthew 11:25-30)

Similar to how she dealt with the initial struggle to participate in a creative journaling pause, Marsha re-centers herself back to the purpose of Sabbath through her faith and opens herself to the creative journaling process.

An Openness Extended—A Return From The Oasis: Choosing the Open

> Many people have a tendency to work against what is natural to them and feel frustrated and worn out because they cannot succeed or excel. Where is the place that you excel, and it feels normal? That special place is where it feels natural to expand, where you feel alive inside and dare to go beyond your limits. The ebb and flow of the tides of the ocean is a natural process. It is a part of God's perfect plan, each wave creating a new design in the sand. Some waves reach higher and farther than others, all a part of the plan. The natural expansion and contraction of the ocean, like our breath, helps us connect to the magnificent rhythm of the universe, the creative forces vibrating in each of us. (Caughlin, 2009, p. 67)

Within the space found and used for our creative journaling and individual and group conversations—the oasis, the women of this study each embraced the creative forces that continuously vibrate within them. From the onset, it was not about finding the

ability to speak and/or having the ability to say what was on her mind about the things that externally engaged and influenced her life—for each woman had this ability already. At least, from the outside it looked and sounded like each woman was comfortable speaking only when she felt the need to expound on a particular thought, idea, and/or topic. However, it was about each woman giving herself permission to accept a space of a pause and engage in the practice of opening herself to find and use language, the thing, the creative tool—the word, image, and/or design—to create language to express herself genuinely, or authentically. This approval allowed the deepest part of herself, *Dasein*, to listen-away from the they, the eternal forces that pull her away from the attention of herself, or as Sharron likes to say with the pronoun: "Myself."

> Myself—The definition, first, of myself is that it has always been the middle person of my life as I, myself, and me. So, myself always has been the meditator of I and me. Now, I'm learning how strong and what type of person I am within myself. So, that's why I said myself. Myself is always taking care of everything. I didn't realize I was taking care of other people's lives. Thinking that was the right thing for myself to do. Now, I'm learning to take care of myself. So, myself is a very strong important person in my life. (Sharron)

In the English language, "myself" is an empathic or reflexive pronoun. As an empathic pronoun, it "refers back to another noun (or pronoun) in the sentence to emphasize it; and, as a reflective pronoun, it "is used with another noun (or pronoun) when [a person or thing] does something to itself" (https://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/). Sharron uses "myself" both ways—to emphasize (empathic) and to indicate what has been done to herself (reflective).

> Well, when we were arranging for you to come, I realized that I'm stuck in the house; and, that was not the air I wanted my life to be in at that moment. I wanted to go out to do something for me. That's why I was willing to take the chance with my car to come out; and, to do something that was so important for me. That's also a part of gratefulness—to even realize that I want to do something for Sharron. Not for my responsibility I have at home. Not for the volunteering that I

> choose to do during the week. Not the choice of going to the doctors and doing this and ripping and running. It was something that I needed for myself. There's that word again—Myself. Myself very seldom did anything for itself. It was always for I, Me, and everybody else. It was. If I was not ahead by controlling everything, it was me whining, "Nobody loves me." And, myself would always say, "It's going to be alright; It's going to be alright." Now, it is alright because myself is doing something good for myself. …Coming here was good for myself.

Heidegger (1962) asserts, "*Dasein* is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine" (p. 150). Sharron gauged her emotions and tended to her needs, which were revealed and fueled by the need to do something for "Myself," the self of whom she is. Myself is significant to one's existence.

> The question of the "who" answers itself in terms of the "I" itself, the 'subject', the 'Self'. The "who" is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in so doing. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 150)

In his groundbreaking work, Perry (1968/1999) indicates that there are nine developmental stages, or positions as he calls them, in the scheme of individuals making meaning as they grow cognitively and ethically. Each step provides a new challenge to a person's current worldview, and "multiplicity" is stage two. Within this stage, an individual has moved from the belief that there is one answer (dualism) to the understanding that there are many diverse answers (multiplicity). This stage is where a creative journaling pause helps a woman to see, acknowledge, and/or find ways to express her life through the personal opinions and/or values that she has about her life.

> Multiplicity. Diversity of opinion and values is recognized as legitimate in areas where right answers are not yet known. Opinions remain atomistic without patterns or systems. No judgments can be made among them so 'everyone has a right to his [or her] opinion: none can be called wrong.' (Perry, 1981, pp. 79-80)

Through some form of creative journaling activity, this stage "can provide a means for women to move from a position of dependence, relying only the knowledge they receive

from others (received knowledge) to the point where they listen to and trust their inner voice (subjective knowledge)" (Peterson & Jones, 2001, p. 60). However, some women have not yet been privy to a creative journaling pause nor have they participated in any journaling activities, not to mention creative journaling activities. Experiencing the benefits of playing in a sand garden is unknown. Therefore, as the women of this study suggested in their conversations, it is essential that the experience of a creative journaling pause and the tool of creative journaling be discussed and shared. In the sand, hidden treasures are waiting to be found.

> They will call the peoples to the mountain (Mount Carmel);
> There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness;
> For they will draw out the abundance of the seas,
> And the hidden treasures of the sand.
> (KJV, Deuteronomy 33:19)

The good thing about sand is: it is innumerable, and its uses are immeasurable. Sunflower suggests keeping a diary/journal is like having "an encyclopedia of your life." Thus, the final rendering expression is uniquely personal and varied. A space is opened for every person regardless of the type of journal created. As Capacchoine (2015) emphasizes with her method of journaling, "The Creative Journal is not a closed method, but an open-ended creative approach that continues to grow with the different applications" (p. 5).

> Ultimately, our greatest creative act is living our daily lives. Creativity is about making space; it is about listening to ourselves and to the world around us. We must see beyond the surface to the multiple dimensions of the world, opening ourselves to the newness that stirs there. We can cultivate a sense of spontaneity and playfulness, while honoring our commitments lovingly and intentionally. (Paintner, 2011, p. 39)

Within the study, each of the women came to acknowledge that the act of creating gave them space, space for being open, out in the open. The creative journaling pause

necessitated the moment for them to dis-engage with the normalcy of life, which often includes taking care of others, to re-engage with the creativity that underlies their own lives. Inherently, as the women felt connected to their own experiences of a creative journal pause, they found themselves, eventually, wanting to connect with and assist other women with writing themselves free to the openness of who they are. As each woman spoke about her own experience, she gave pieces of information on how to view, navigate, and participate in a creative journaling pause.

Open to Push

> Ms Rain say we got to write now in our journals. Say each of our lives is important. ...Say each of us has a story to tell. …I don't have nothing to write today—maybe never. Hammer in my heart now, beating me, I feel like my blood a giant river swell up inside me and I'm drowning. My head all dark inside. Feel like giant river I never cross in front me now. Ms Rain say, You not writing Precious. I say I drownin' in river. She don't look me [sic] like I'm crazy but say, If you just sit there the river gonna rise up drown you! Writing could be the boat carry you to the other side. One time in your journal you told me you had never really told your story. I think telling your story git [sic] you over the river Precious . ... "I'm tired," I says. She says, "I know you are but you can't stop now Precious, you gotta push." And I do. (Quote from the character "Precious" in *Push*, 1996, pp. 96-97)

Each of the women of the study pushed themselves to participate in the creative journaling activities as requested. The push, usually intentional, serves as a purpose to move beyond the point of where we find ourselves standing in life. In the narrative above, Precious, the main character of the book *Push* (Sapphire, 1996), is a student in an adult literacy class, learning to read and write. Her dialogue comes from a place of feeling defeated after receiving the news that she is HIV positive—a result of being sexually abused, raped. Outside of class, life is a constant struggle for her. In class, the teacher—Ms. Rain—has created a space of release, instructing the class to think and write, "Write what's on your mind, push yourself to see the letters that represent the

words you're thinking" (p. 61). However, this creative space of thinking and forming words can happen only from a space of openness, a position truth.

Heidegger (1971b) asserts, "Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered, the un-uncovered, in the sense of un-concealment" (p. 60). From the Old English *triewð* (West Saxon) and *treowð* (Mercian), truth is defined as "faith, faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty; veracity, quality of being true; pledge, covenant" (https://www.etymonline.com/). In the novel, Ms. Rain helps her students unearth the truth of their lives hidden like treasures in the sand. She pushes them to open their minds to the capacity of journaling. The journaling makes a way for each student, each person to tap in to the confidence of who she is as a person living as an individual. It is a way of redirecting a person back from the focus of circumstance to the cusp of just being human, to the cusp of being in the open about herself. In the study, Marsha is a prime example of a person on the cusp, noting that the creative journaling activities give her a chance to assess herself on specific human qualities.

> [I can access] my life. My attitude. My self-perception. Two of the exercises today ask you to evaluate a reaction to something. That forced me to go back and reconsider or relook at the impression, or my response of things that have been said to me, about me, and whether or not I had internalized those or what have I done with that. Did I let that come into me? or Did I just use that as a … as a marker? You know: Some of this is like, okay? Now what do you think? You said I never, woulda, shoulda, coulda. Now what do you think? Everything you said "I didn't" or "I couldn't" has been done. So…that's definitely a marker, definitely a marker, definitely a marker. (Marsha)

As mentioned in chapter two, markers are those moments in our lives that have given us reason to pause in some form or fashion. These moments help us to both feel and know who we are and who we are not. In a manner of speaking, these moments are self-assessments, the act or process of analyzing and evaluating oneself or one's actions

(https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-assessment). In creative journaling, self-assessing is not punitive. It is not to condemn self, but to help with making a decisive decision about the next course of action in our lives. The pause is not a complete stop in life, but instead a *to be continued*—life is lived either the same as before or changed as the creative journaling person self-examines.

> Stop—everything ceases, right? But pause—I [pushed] the pause button—so that I can add something into the washer machine. At the same time, I could have taken something out, but pause implies that I'm in motion, or that something is in motion. Something is active, in that, for a second or for a frame, what have you, that that has been put on hold in order to assess something. (Marsha)

This self-examining assessment allows a temporary stop action that may eventually lead to a forward action. However, for a person to enter this type of self-examining space, she must be willing to be open—open to feel her feelings; open to give her feelings form; and, open to let her feelings manifest on the page before her and possibly others in the openness of life. Once she opens to express herself, she is able to push, allowing the words and images to flow from her into the world.

For The Blood of Our Veins

In 2019, the past disturbed the present.
In the 70s, spit splashed my face.
In the 80s, the word nigger sounded from a bus.
For both, a pause gave space to remember—
my blood runs red, hers and his do too.
Yeah, *uh huh*, I forgave them—and now, you. Forgiveness we must do.
For the blood of our veins is screaming, "No more! No more bloody walls."
(S. Riley, 2019)

Open to Acknowledge the Opening

> Creative Journal keeping is a tool for personal growth using journal writing and drawing. … The page becomes a mirror for seeing yourself more clearly. It is also a medium for conversing freely with yourself. Starting with self-communication in private, you can then develop your ability to communicate with others. Being clear with yourself opens the way for being more clear with others about how you

> feel and think, enriching your relationships and social interactions. (Capacchione, 2015, pp. 4-5)

Sharron found the opening she needed to express her feelings without worry. It is within her creative journaling pauses, where she releases her truthful thoughts into the journal. From the Old English word *opening*, opening is defined as the "act of opening (a door, mouth, etc.)" or "disclosure, manifestation" (https://www.etymonline.com). For Sharron, the opening manifested into her ability to open her mouth and disclose, or speak, her truth about how she feels. As Capacchione (2015) suggests, the journal helped Sharron to be clear with herself about what she feels and what she thinks. It even gave her clarity with what she did not like.

> I can say what I want and express what I want without feeling bad about it. That's a residue that is being removed. That's it. If I don't like your reading, I can say I didn't like your reading. That's creative journaling. That's something I can say without sitting here with an attitude or feeling bad or uncomfortable. I can say it, before I wouldn't say it. It's an opening. (Sharron)

Prior to taking creative journaling pauses, Sharron would hold on to her words even though she had something that needed to be said. Instead of releasing, or saying, her words, Sharron would hold on to them, which caused discomfort and disdain for herself and/or others. With creative journaling, she was able to let go, be herself, and release her own expressions, saying how she thinks and how she feels. Through truth, she finds an opening.

> It's an opening about something; it's an opening about me that I didn't know I could have. It's an opening. It's an opening. Sonya, it's an opening. It's an opening to even say, I'm here to spend my day with you, not to go out and do something else. That's an opening for me without even feeling bad about it. 'Cause this is the choice I made for me, not for nobody else. I'm always catering to others. …An opening for myself, not for anybody else. [It's] the reality of my life. And, that's being honest with myself. …That's [an] opening. (Sharron)

Heidegger (1971) asserts, “Truth happens only by establishing itself in the conflict and sphere opened up by truth itself” (p. 61). By taking a creative journaling pause, Sharron allows herself to become a priority in her own life, no more catering only to others. She is no longer disturbed by the conflict of whether or not to make herself a priority in her own life. She found an opening. Now, she makes a commitment to herself.

> Truth is the primal conflict in which, always in some particular way, the Open is won within which everything stands and from which everything withholds itself that shows itself and withdraws itself as a being. Whenever and however this conflict breaks out and happens, the opponents, lighting or clearing and concealing, move apart because of it. Thus the Open of the place of conflict is won. (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 60-61)

By being honest with herself, Sharron is committed to being true to herself. This committed decision to operate in her own truth, allows her to be open to see an opening for authenticity in her own life. This authenticity gives way to living a fulfilled life—life orchestrated in concert with you at the center. In the words of Sharron, “It’s your shoes that you walk in. Nobody else can walk in them. They might fit [your shoes], but they can’t fit them like you fit them. They may be the same size, but one of their toes does not fit the same way as one of your toes fit in your own shoes.” With creative journaling and her shoe analogy, Sharron indicates that she’s walking into an opening, “the reality of my life. And, that’s being honest with myself.”

Open to the Process

> So, in our journal work, we are continually practicing openness and wonder. It is not easy to overcome all those years of training to judge, evaluate, analyze, and categorize. When we catch ourselves following the old rules in our journals, it is a chance to practice. Rather than judging (“I see that I am judging, and I should not do that”), we can observe (“I see that I am judging when I say that”) and let it be. All we need to do is see cleanly. Having seen, our being will do what needs to be done. As we let go of the need to judge and begin just to see and say, the world slowly opens like a blossom for us. As the boxes in our minds fall away, the real world comes alive. (Nelson, 2004, pp. 58-59)

Like Ms. Rain, the women of the study felt a sense of responsibility to assist other women with practicing creative journaling in their own lives. When discussing what might be said to a woman interested in creative journaling, the word "open" resonated in and around the group. Each woman had a different take on what it meant to be open, but all agreed it was a part of the creative journaling process, specifically because it allows you to balance between the conflict of what is true and what is not true about who you are as an individual during a creative journal pause. Truth shines a light, opening both sides—what is and what is not. Heidegger (1971b) asserts, "The openness of this Open, that is, truth, can be what it is, namely, this openness, only if and as long as it establishes itself within its Open" (p. 61). From Old English, open is defined as "not closed down" and "raised up" (https://www.etymonline.com/). In deciding to be open, not closed, we allow ourselves to be raised up in every situation, despite its makeup. In being open, we allow truth to make its way forward.

> One essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is truth setting itself into work. … Still another way in which truth grounds itself is the essential sacrifice. Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 61)

For Sharron, the creative journaling pause is a moment in which you must be ready—ready to engage fully in the experience that opens the truth. She assesses her own readiness with questions, reminding us that "truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment" (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 60). When Sharron questions herself, she questions the truth not yet uncovered.

> [A creative journaling pause is] a time where you have to really say, "I am ready." Ready for what? I'm ready for me; I'm ready for the change in me; I'm ready to take time out for myself. I'm ready to even write whatever I may feel or whatever I am dealing with and be able to face it when I read it. You just can't sit there and say I'm ready to take this class because it has a lot of feelings. It has a lot of change. It will show you things about you, you didn't even know you had. Just like today, the reading—your reading. It grieved my spirit for a moment, but it is getting better. You've got to be ready to receive whatever is going to be given to you; and, be honest. If you don't like it or if there is a problem, this is the time you have to really be ready for you and be honest with yourself. You have to be ready to receive it for that change. (Sharron)

Using phrases like "whatever is going to be given" and "it will show you things about you, you didn't even know you had," Sharron indicates an acceptance and recognition of surrendering to the process of being open in a creative journaling pause. And, then, throughout her thought process, Sharron harnesses honesty with being ready. This harnessing allows her the ability to gauge her feelings truthfully.

> See I can write anything, but one day I have to go back and read it. Am I ready to read it? There's things I've written that I looked at in the beginning of it when I got out of prison, which I didn't know. And I'll read it, and I would say, no I'm not ready. I noticed out of the 5 years of a relationship in the 11th year—for 5 years, I wrote about how unhappy I was. I didn't even know it. (Sharron)

Through this creative journal experience, Sharron was nudged to review journals from the past. In a state of openness, Sharron was ready to allow herself the opportunity to see the negative feelings written in a journal from years before, feelings she had previously ignored while in the relationship itself. On the surface, it seems that the conflict between one feeling over another would cause problems. However, Sharron was able to learn the truth and move forward. Thus, as Heidegger (1971) reminds us, "The conflict is not a rift as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather, it the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their

common ground" (p. 63). By asking herself questions, Sharron was able to expose conflict and see the truth. This step is important to allowing yourself to be open.

Essentially, the key is not to over think the creative journaling process. For instance, Belle asserts, "Don't think a whole lot into it. I think if you over think, you could over think the whole process and miss what you need to be contributing. Be open. Definitely be open … to the journaling process." For Orchid's perspective, an open minded person is someone "who doesn't have preconceived ideas about either what the process should be like or what the answers should be. … an open mind is someone who is receptive to just allowing the process to unfold and to seeing where it leads." By being open to who you are as creative person, you become open to new ways of experiencing the journaling process. As you let things happen, you are allowing yourself to give back to yourself. You are allowing the process to reveal and gift you with a truth about and for yourself.

Open Areas Not Yet Watered

> Every aspect of our lives can be an arena for creative work. When we make space to breathe deeply— in our jobs, relationships, and leisure—we open ourselves up to give voice to vision and birth to newness. Creativity is an essential and life-giving practice that requires spaciousness, attention, and intention in order to flourish. As well, it requires a degree of surrender of our control over the process. (Paintner, 2011, pp. 39-40)

For Marsha, creativeness is not a natural choice. Yet, she is not hindered by the creative journaling process. In fact, Marsha is open to it primarily because she is comfortable with who she is as a person. This issue is working through the conflict of not having nurtured her creative self, letting herself journal through the unknown understanding of how she might create.

> Um, I tell you when we were selecting which of the practices to do, the one that I ran from was the creative one. I purposely ran from that one because I was like: That part of myself, I have not watered. So, when the exercise said, you know, creatively put an image. I said, "Child please. That would be some stick people [with] browns, blacks, and blues in terms of shadowing, no vibrancy, no light because I have not watered that part of my life. And, not that it's not existent, it's just not nurtured because the analytical scientific part of my life has required so much attention. And, so now this, as I was forced to do the collage, and what not. Me looking for images! [Yet] I know that there is creativity in there. …the beautiful thing is: Out of the little that was in those resources, I was still able to pull together the story and articulate so that it means something to me. So, again, that goes back to being complete, complete in Jesus. And being able to take what's given and then make something [and] say something that speaks to my situation. (Marsha)

Despite her reservations, Marsha remained opened. She moved forward with the activities of the creative journaling pause as though she set her mind to push through the conflict between being more scientifically analytical and less creative. As her capacity for creativity widened, ingenuity or resourcefulness was not an issue. She navigated the journaling process using methods that allowed her to complete the task within her own abilities. For Marsha, the un-watered, or unused, part of her abilities to create was not an excuse not to try. Instead, she found a reason to use what was learned through the different techniques practiced during the creative journaling sessions of the study. The lessons for her were a type of apprenticeship, a sharing of creative skills that she learned from me, the researcher facilitator.

> I'll add this: In a way, I see it as almost as an apprenticing, if that make sense. For example, the author that you choose to use for the creative journal, she had to introduce particular techniques. So, she apprenticed. Your question of if meeting another woman, how would I would introduce—it's really apprenticing. You're doing this with me. Really, it's an apprenticing because you have done it. You've mastered it, and now you're passing it on. (Marsha)

As a verb, the Online Etymology Dictionary defines apprentice as an approach "to bind to a master for instruction in his craft" (https://www.etymonline.com). In a sense,

apprenticing is a teaching method used to assist apprentices with their personal learning needs while teaching them the essentials of the craft at hand (Heidegger, 1968; Resnick, 1969). Heidegger (1968) writes "To learn means to make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address themselves to us at a given time" (p. 14). Orchid asserts, creative journaling is "a way for you to explore your thoughts and feelings about some issue or question that's on your mind, that you might be grappling with and hadn't been able to figure it out in another way."

> It allows you to tap into the creative side, because we're all creative in some way. I mean everybody, you know, can't draw beautiful pictures, but, creativity doesn't just have to be just about art or about being an artist. It can be anything. And, we all have that ability to a certain degree. So, it allows you to use that part of yourself, um, to help you find answers to that question that is, that's foremost in your mind. … For some people, it's stressful. I have had that experience at retreats where, you know, some people are like are you kidding me? This is too childish. … if they are open enough, by the end of the time, they're like: "Oh, that wasn't too bad." "I actually got some insights there." [Orchids laughs] There are always some who are not open minded. So, I think for creative journaling to be effective, you have to have an open mind. (Orchid)

Like Marsha, Orchid recognizes that through each journaling activity, a creative journaling pause allows you the opportunity to tap into a part of yourself not yet fully "watered," or cultivated. In particular, it provides you with a receptor of sort that reaches your inward ability to create words and/or images as you journal your way through a question, issue, or concern that has caused a disturbance in you. Without an open mind, it is impossible to be stress-free while allowing the presence of conflict to work its way into a beautiful masterpiece of reconciliation.

> Journal writing teaches us about the nature of creativity. It helps us become more awake, expansive and open in all areas of our life. It offers a way to foster a sense of wonder. …Creativity draws us into the mystery of our lives, into the unknown. Many people are afraid of the unknown, especially the unknown parts of themselves that open through self-reflection and practices that call them into greater self-awareness. Journalling, in particular, requires that we surrender and

> have faith in where the writing might take us, which is often into the unknown. (Cutler, Monk, & Shira, 2014, p. 66)

When we are in conflict concerning the unknown, we are not necessarily in opposition to it. In the 15th century, from the Latin word *conflitus*, conflict is defined as "to contend, fight, [or] struggle" (https://www.etymonline.com). In a struggle for something, though disturbed, we are not necessarily against it. Through conflict, we are able to find the boundary, the line that will assist us with creating a balance—a balance that allows us to live and be present in our own lives. Conflict awakens us to ourselves. It indicates a possible need for a life readjustment.

For Dianne, though painful, conflict allowed her a chance to choose herself. Dianne remembers how creativity and hurt assisted her with blocking out the words people said to belittle her. Through creativity, as discussed earlier, she was able to find a way to love herself as God loves her, and through hurt she learned the technique of blocking out others, i.e., ignoring the things and people who aim to deplete her.

> It comes from creativity—being able to block things out, but it also comes from hurt too. It comes from being hurt in life with people saying some mean, negative things. And, they say it right in my presence as if I was invisible. They thought they had a right to say it in front of me. So, I just had to learn how to block stuff out. Honest to God, people would say all kinds of mean-spirited things. Oh, you're fat … as if I wasn't there and I would tune it out. I just tuned it out, and I had to learn how to tune out the hurt in order to keep functioning. Or else it would have brought me down and I would have never been able to … [a pause]. I had to do it in school. I had to do it in college, High School, Elementary school. ... It was the only way I knew how to survive. If I didn't, it would have brought me down. I would have never … girl [extended "girrrl"], I—they probably would have sent me to a psychiatrist. I had to learn how to block … I honestly did, I had to learn how to block that out. (Dianne)

Dianne was open to the lesson of "blocking out" and embracing herself to disallow the pain of hurt to destroy her. In addition, Dianne not only embraces the creativity and hurt, but she also realizes that if additional help was needed to cope with the negative aspects

of her conflict, she would have had to seek external professional help in a psychiatrist. This realization is key. During conflict, we must remember: we do what can by ourselves, but we need to ask for help from others when it is needed.

Conflict does not have to be the enemy. Coupled with journaling in a creative journaling pause by ourselves and/or with others, it can be a friend to assist each of us with seeing beyond the present moment. It can be the fork in the road that either takes you forward into the next adventure of your life or takes you back into an old one. If you allow it, conflict will assist you in being your authentic self. Through a creative journaling pause, the disturbance of conflict allows each of us a moment of creativity to open ourselves to who we are as individuals. Within this moment, stillness presents us with gifts that allow us to open space in time, within our own lives, just to be, just to create, just breathe.

Ending This Work In The Sand

> In order to read the stories hidden in a grain of sand, we need to look at its exterior and interior, to take it apart. Like people, each sand grain is unique but belongs to a particular family with common genetics and origins. Just as stories are told in different languages and emerge from different cultures, sand can be created in different ways and can be composed of a wide variety of substances … (Welland, 2009, p. 3)

In closing this chapter, a DVD title comes to mind, *Pause Because Everyone Is Tempted* (Stanley, 2007). At some point, everyone is tempted to lead or live a life that is not their own. This temptation can cause a disturbance. We decide either to stay true to ourselves or we opt to become like everyone else. Fortunately, a creative journaling pause provides space. The space is a moment, a place, a memory, a plan of expressive openness to push one's self creatively through an active process in which a created product is birthed from the inside out. The act of pausing as a person who creatively

journals provides space to be who we are *and* to lead the life we need to live as unique individuals in the world with others. As the women unearthed their inner thoughts thorough the practice of creative journaling, they were able to express themselves externally. The creative journaling pauses provided a type of oasis, a sacred place of rest that allowed her, each woman, to experience a journey on life's pathway to express, re-express, and/or not express the particulars of who she is as an individual pausing to cultivate her personal garden or authentic self. It allowed her the ability to "[take] a deep breath and [listen] to the old brag of [her] heart. I am, I am, I am" (Plath, 1971/2013, p. 243).

A creative journaling pause inspires each woman individually. Each life is essential. Each disturbance is real. Each pause is true. Each story is excavated from the depths of our being to the journal page of a creative journaling pause. The pause allowed the women the ability to engage with their own past, present, and future with words, images, and pictures. The stories hidden in the sand, or journal pages, surfaced through our conversations, exposing the truth of the phenomenon, a creative journaling pause, birthing the essential themes of this chapter: A Disturbance Awakens—A Journey Towards An Oasis; A Chasm Remembered—A Vulnerability Exposes The Path To An Oasis; A Moment Revealed—An Expression Unfolds In the Oasis; and, An Openness Extended—A Return from the Oasis. Within this chapter, each theme helped to uncover the nature of the phenomenon, answering the question, **What is the lived experience of women participating in a creative journaling pause?**

> Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful:

> a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. … Lived experience is the breathing of meaning. (van Manen, 1997, p. 36)

As an individual who practices creative journaling, my perspectives have been broadened and my own personal garden has been cultivated in a pause. From the start of this research, I asked the question that anchors the study. Then, together, with the study participants, we kept asking and discussing the question while navigating the sand in our gardens to bring forth the nature of a creative journaling pause. By the end of our time together, each woman who participated in the fourth and last session created their own personal expression to summarize through an image what a creative journaling pause is to them, honoring each of their own interpretations of what it is (see Appendix M and Appendix N). Each of their expressions is used to mark the last page in their journals concerning this study, *ending this work in the sand*. Now, together, we turn to chapter five as I provide the new insights and pedagogical implications that unfolded for me through this phenomenological research study.

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A CREATIVE JOURNALING PAUSE

Embracing CJP

I am pausing—
surprised by the unknown,
detained by overflowing emotions,
a moment opened,
a resolve suggested—this or that, them or me, they or I
an invitation offered
I, myself, paused.

Oasis—the garden unfolds.
stillness abounds, love arises,
I, myself, paused.

Choosing to be me—
symbols unfold,
dancing on pages, swirling in sand
my story, my experience—
my life, a work of art illuminated.
I, myself, paused.

Colors imaged in the sand;
lines drawn in the dirt;
words blown across the wind—
a creative journal birth.
I, myself, paused.

Open, opened, openness—
divine rest.
I, myself, paused.

From the mud, a lotus appears,
choosing myself, too, I paused—
coming to the table to breathe anew
sitting at the table to reflect anew
leaving with the table to build anew
I embrace CJP—a
Creative Journaling Pause.
(S. Riley, 2019)

With this chapter, I bring my dissertation to a close. This research journey has enlightened me through both challenging and encouraging experiences. From a challenged perspective, I needed to trust the process and remain open to what the phenomenon was showing me through my research. As stated previously, "'Phenomenology' means to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58). I needed to let the phenomenon reveal itself as itself. From an encouraging perspective, I enjoyed the process. I am inspired by the way a creative journaling pause revealed itself though the lived experiences of the six women of this study—Belle, Dianne, Marcia, Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower. These women helped me to explore the abiding question: **What is the lived experience of women participating in creative journaling pause?**

With joy, I am edified and honed as an educator-researcher, trusting the nature of things to show me in themselves who they are. Yet, even with my feelings of joy, I had to re-center myself before writing this final chapter of my dissertation, interacting with the question—What practical implications of a creative journaling pause come forth in this my research? As I pondered this question, I paused. Then, I began to remember van Manen's (2007) thoughts of a pedagogue. Here are his direct words:

> For us this phenomenological interest of doing research materializes itself in our everyday practical concerns as parents, teachers, teacher educators, psychologists, child care specialists, administrators: in short, pedagogues. As pedagogues we ongoingly must act responsibly and responsively in our relations with children, with youth, or with those to whom we stand in a pedagogical relationship. So in some strange sense, the theoretical practice of phenomenological research, like the mundane practice of pedagogy, is a ministering of thoughtfulness. (p. 38)

A Ministering of Thoughtfulness

The phrase "a ministering of thoughtfulness" carries a lot of weight for me. In dispensing thoughtfulness to others, I must first come from a place of thoughtfulness. So, with this understanding, I paused to remember and review the former chapters.

With journal in hand, my pause of chapters past was intentional, because it is a thoughtful engaged process of me thinking through the meaning of this research—What does all of this mean in deep review of what was discussed and studied? Van Manen (1982) asserts, "This kind of text cannot be summarized. To present research by way of reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet with it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it" (p. 153). As a phenomenologist, I am at one with my research. I pause to remember this truth.

> And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching—questioning—theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world. (van Manen, 1997, p. 5)

Like other phenomenologists, the way in which I "do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (van Manen, 1997, p. 5). As a human being who is a woman of faith, I am in the world (or earth realm) engaging with the things of the world. However, I disengage or do not engage in the things of the world that do not constitute who I am as a Christian. Yet, as a phenomenologist, the word "world" has a boarder meaning than earth realm for me. Once again, I pause and take notice.

Without my physical body, I am not a being in the earth realm (world), able to engage with the world. As a spiritual being, I am not of this world. From the Old English

woruld, world means "human existence," "the affairs of life," "a long period of time," and "the human race, mankind, [or] humanity" (https://www.etymonline.com/). In using the premise of this definition, as a spiritual being with a physical body, I become the world in which I live and/or engage. From my perspective, Heidegger (1971b) describes the vague meaning of world best with who we are as spiritual and physical beings:

> The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. Wherever those decisions of our history that relate to our very being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds. (pp. 44-45)

Being in the world is the way in which we experience the world, the way in which I experience the world. For me, creative journaling is a way for me to be and become while seeing and creating the truest version of me in the world. It is a way for me to come-to, sit-at, and leave-with the table of a creative journaling pause while embracing, remembering, and envisioning myself being in the earth realm with others as I am—me, myself, and I.

Coming-to the table,
Sitting-at the presence of myself,
eventually *leaving-with* the truth of who I am—
playing in the sand of a creative journaling pause.
(S. Riley, 2019)

As adults, we rarely choose to play or participate in a creative and reflective activity outside of our daily roles (Dorwick, 2009; Capacchione, 2015). What happened to the little girl glee of creating something out of nothing at any given moment of the day—no fear, no negative self-talk, no doubt that what was created is good just because it

was created. The fact is that it was created out of a desire to produce an extension of self, an extension that is shared and sometimes kept to one's self.

Usually, before I or we can reach the table of a creative journaling pause, we must experience a disturbance, an emotional mood changer, that creates a gap or space and causes a temporary moment of disengagement—a pause, "a period of apparent noninteraction" (Snow & Brissett, 1986, p. 4). It is this moment of pause that creates the ability for us to move toward a creative journaling pause. So, first, I begin with this pre-pause, the quiet before the need to move toward an embrace of a CJP.

In Pre-Pause: The Pause Before A Creative Journaling Pause (CJP)

> When you become aware of silence, immediately there is that state of inner still alertness. You are present. You have stepped out of thousands of years of collective human conditioning. (Tolle, 2003, p. 6)

Like sand, silence has a hidden beauty. The competence variability of what it is or what it can be varies from person to person, making it almost impossible to define, judge, and/or refute someone else's reason for silence. Silence provides an open space, birthing a pause, a gap radiating between what is heard and what is not. The gap of silence provides "an invisible" point of safety away from the group, while in the presence of the group, or as Sharron says, "grouping," until one's confidence arises—or not.

> … I didn't use to like too much grouping because I realized I was insecure, afraid of what people may see of what I've been through. They would see it in me, and they would not like me. But now I love grouping. I realize I'm not the only one; I'm not alone; I'm not alone in whatever I'm going through. There's somebody in the group that can relate to what I'm going through. So, I'm not in this alone. I don't have to be quiet. I don't have to see you one-on-one to say what I have to say. I can say it in the open because I am not alone. And, I learned this from being in this group, I learned that I am not alone; and, I'm not by myself. (Sharron)

In other incidences, it is the silence found during or after a conversation that attracts an individual to seek out herself in the depths of who she is, allowing herself to sift through

and examine the quiet of what has not yet been said. It was here in this gap of stillness, during a conversation about creative journaling activities, that each of the women who felt a silence, paused, and accepted my invitation to participate in this study.

According to van Manen (1997), silence can be framed into three types—literal silence, epistemological silence, and ontological silence. First, a literal silence is "the absence of speaking. Sometimes, it is better to remain silent than to speak or write" (p. 112), leaving no room to ramble. Second, an epistemological silence is "the kind of silence we are confronted with when we face the unspeakable. …We may have knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency" (p. 113). This type of silence appears during the "unspeakable or ineffable," experiences in our lives (p. 113). It allows for three things: a) someone else to speak for us, b) another type of discourse (or way of expression) to say what needs to be said, and/or c) a way for the once unspeakable in one moment to become readily available in the next, "however incomplete" (van Manen, 1997, p. 114). Third, an ontological silence is "the silence of Being or Life itself. …It is indeed at those moments of greatest and most fulfilling insight or meaningful experience that we also experience the "dumb"-founding sense of a silence that fulfills and yet craves fulfillment" (p. 114).

As highlighted in chapter one, silence is not just the absence of language, but it can also be the precursor to deep thought (van Manen, 1997)—a mechanism allowing for the release of language as it becomes readily available. At times, an individual must even step back from her own vision of what it means to enter a pause described in silence, stillness, and quietness. This stepping back initiates a form of wait-time (Rowe, 1972) and allows her a moment—a gap in time used to play the wait game, which is often

defined as “the stratagem of deferring actions and allowing the passage of time to work in one’s favor” (American Heritage Collegiate, 2002, p. 1541). Yet, the question always remains, in who’s favor? This stratagem, plan, or scheme may be used to outmaneuver another, but it may also be used to achieve an end, to fill a gap that is specific to the situation at hand.

> Pay attention to the gap — the gap between two thoughts, the brief, silent space between words in a conversation, between the notes of a piano or flute, or the gap between the in-breath and out-breath. When you pay attention to those gaps, awareness of “something” becomes — just awareness. The formless dimension of pure consciousness arises from within you and replaces identification with form. (Tolle, 2003, p. 7)

Unfortunately, a gap in anything is often thought of as obscurely awkward or as a waste, but what if we thought of it first as full—full of possibilities, full of hope, full of faith, full of belief and full of memories. The fullness accentuates the aspect of waiting to receive a gift of newness, change, and/or grace to move beyond the present. With the thought of fullness, the gap is a space of investment for growth and potential. Moments of pause used to think, grow, embrace, create, cultivate, or just be still in who we are as individuals. For me, a creative journaling pause gives us just that—the wait time to come to the table of ourselves, to create and release an expression of our life through the vision or visions of who we have been, who we are, and/or who we hope to become as life sources in the earth realm.

The six women in this study recognized the gap in their lives; and, accepted an invitation to participate in a creative journaling pause to dig deeper into who they were as individual women. Their lived experiences and the phenomenological research process called us to a journey of creating and showing an expression of self. Together and separately, the women came to the table. With tablet in hand, each woman created and

formed a vision of themselves through word, symbol, image, and color, communicating the expression, “This is who I am” (see an example of this in Appendices R through V).

This is who I am,
a woman addressing her gap—
accepting a pause
writing in the sand to remember,
that I too am alive,
coming to the table to breathe, to see, to live.
(S. Riley, 2019)

Coming to the Table

> And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (KJV, Habakkuk 2:2-3)

In Latin, the word vision is derived from *visionem*, which means the “act of seeing,” “sight,” and “thing seen” (https://www.etymonline.com/). It is “something that is or has been seen;” it is “the manner in which one sees or conceives of something” (American Heritage Collegiate, 2002, p. 1533). It is the capacity, or ability, to show the person who encapsulates the “Who I am” in each of us. Coming to the table opens the capacity for each participant of a creative journaling pause to see the person within herself who captures the who I am of who she is. Coming to the table allows us to not only write a vision but also to prioritize ourselves to express, see, and possibly live the vision. The table allows a centering, a coming back to self with self and/or with others, allowing the ability to visually see our life as it was, as it is, and/or as it is soon to be. Coming to the table orchestrates a pause to remember, to prioritize, and to cultivate self in the midst of this thing we call Life.

Remembering: A Woman Recalls A Table Memory—Alone, But Together

> The table is the place where identity is born—the place where the story of our lives is retold, re-minded, and relived. (Sweet, 2014, p. 3)

Before I delved into this portion of chapter five, I found myself coming to the table remembering the story I jotted down at the onset of my writing chapter four. It was my first recollection of coming to the table alone in school, but in the presence of others. In addition, this remembering reminded me of my intention for setting the table of a creative journaling pause for the women of my own study. It stems back to a day in grade school, or Elementary, when I first embraced the word "oasis." The following is my re-telling of what I remember from that precious day in 4th grade.

It was the first day of school, and my teacher, or I should say our teacher, pointed to the center of the classroom where a sign hanging from the ceiling above a table and asked, what is an oasis? The room fell silent. Many of us began looking at the table with four to five chairs hoping to find some type of clue. Our teacher was in a state of pause, using wait-time to her advantage.

As I think about it now, our teacher cleverly used this soundless occasion as a teachable moment. Dictionaries were passed out; directions were uttered for us to search for the meaning of the word; and, a race ensued as it seemed none of us knew how to define oasis. Frantically, the crispy pages of our dictionaries were turned to the meaning of this new word. Then, with excited sounds, several of us began to erratically raise our hands as the question was asked of us, the class, once again: Who can tell me what is an oasis?

> oasis (ō ā sis) n. pl. o·a·ses (-sēz)
> 1. A fertile or green area in a desert or wasteland, made so by the presence of water.

> 2. A situation or place preserved from surrounding unpleasantness; a refuge: an oasis of serenity amid chaos. (American Heritage Dictionary, 2017)

Our teacher exclaimed excitedly as one of my classmates finished reading the entire dictionary entry for oasis as defined and derived. Then, she furthered explained that the oasis in the middle of our classroom was a place for us to come, throughout the day, as we, her students, finished our assignments. It was a place—a table of imagination—to engage and think quietly and peacefully as we did fun activities like reading the Scholastic Magazine, working a puzzle, or drawing a picture using our favorite colors (markers, crayons, stickers, and colored pencils). It was a place—a table of refuge—to replenish and just be, especially, after journeying through the sometime rough and unpredictable terrain of our 4th grade classwork in the role of a student. It provided the space to reconnect with ourselves and to massage the preserving aspects that help to make us who we are. It taught us to come to the table alone in the presence of others, engaging quietly in our safe imaginative creations while others finished their classwork.

Of course, the table could not fit all of us students at the same time, but I do not remember that being an issue. I think because, over time, the oasis began to extend beyond the designated table to our personal desks or areas we made into our individual personal spaces. The journey did not always mean us migrating to the place and catalyst at the center of the classroom, but to the mental and spiritual centers of ourselves wherever we were in the room. We learned how to find an oasis right where we were, wherever we were. Of course, I did not know this perspective as a 4th grader, but as I engaged with the women of this study, the three-dimensional aspect of accepting the oasis began to unfold for me once again, as we journeyed toward and engaged in a creative journaling pause wherever we were in body, mind, and spirit.

As facilitator, researcher, and active creative journaling participant whenever possible, I found myself being particular about how I engaged the women with the activities and experience. It was my intention to make the table feel like an intimate gathering space that brings them home to themselves in the presence of others (me and the other study participants). This intent was an attempt to keep them centered in the experience of a creative journaling pause, but also keenly connected to their own individual experiences of creating personal expressions. It is my hope that each participant has a moment in the future when she, too, looks back at our time together and remembers a table memory, a memory that allows her to live out an oasis-like experience regardless of where she is in life alone, but together in the presence of others. This moment helps to enter a space that allows her to relive the feeling of being at home with herself as she prioritizes herself.

> Home is what can be recalled without effort—so that sometimes we think, oh, that can't be important. Memories are the blueprints of home. A memoir is a home built from those blueprints. Finding home is crucial to the act of writing. Being here. With what you know. With the tales you've told dozens of times to friends or a spouse or a lover. With the map you've already made in your heart. That's where the real home is: inside. If we carry that home with us all the time, we'll be able to take more risks. We can leave on wild excursions, knowing we'll return. (Heard, 1995, p. 2)

Each time a moment is taken to come to the table, a moment is taken to come home to ourselves through actions of journaling. As mentioned in chapter three, "The journal is a space for dwelling; it is a place of pause within the continuous movement of time; it is a showing of life experiences through a saying of symbols—the words and images mirroring life on the page. Like the physical body is home to the mind and spirit, the creative journal is a physical body housing the sayings of our being as we pause to understand the meaning of our lives. It is our ground—a place of support, a place of

saying, embracing and showing our grasp for meaning," from the inside out. Yet, in order for this understanding to happen we must first take the step to prioritize ourselves through avenues like a creative journaling pause. Prioritizing is intentional; either you prioritize yourself and your life or others will.

Prioritizing: A Woman Choosing to Love Herself First

> More Control—You will gain confidence in your ability to pause, push back, or not rush in. You will feel less and less a function of other people's to-do lists and agendas. Remember that if you don't prioritize your life someone else will. But if you are determined to prioritize your own life you can. The power is yours. It is within you. (McKeown, 2014, p. 235)

Each woman in the study prioritized herself at least four times for this study by attending two group sessions and two individual sessions. Each session became a chance, a moment for each participant to come to the table and just be. By just being, she was able to rest in the power, or influence, of herself as she prioritizes what is essential to her, nurturing a positive growth mind-set as she learns about herself for the benefit of taking care of herself and possibly others in any given moment.

> Life is about timing, and a sense of what's right. You come to understand when it's the right time for a change, for doing something different. As you grow wise, you develop an intuition for what's appropriate, and the inner grace to change deftly and well. (Morris, 2015, p. 16)

From 14th century Medieval Latin *prioritatem*, priority is defined as a "state of being earlier" (https://www.etymonline.com/). As each woman used the moments of the study to make herself a priority in her own life, she was awakened to her own personal journey toward asking and answering the questions of who I am from yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The creative journaling pause and its activities—from journaling to conversation—opened an understanding of herself in the past, current, and future to each other. From yesterday, the women thought of their past, recalling stories from their

childhood, teenage and/or young adult years. From today, the women thought of their present, telling stories from the current moments of their lives. From thoughts of tomorrow, the women talked of possibilities. Her *what was* illuminated the *what is* and the *what may come* of her individual life as she withdrew herself from her daily life to focus on the question of Who am I. The illuminations were expressed in the pages of her creative journal, each rendering an aspect of Who am I in color, word, image and symbol.

Nelson (2004) asserts, "Once you get hold of the idea that every "I" is a "we," that you are made up of many small selves, the power of your personal writing will become more understandable and more available to you" (p. 80). For the most part, "it works something like this: The more you write, the more you become aware of your small selves; the more you become aware of your small selves, the more you become centered in the greater Self" (Nelson, 2004, p. 80). In other words, the more you write—or in this case with creative journaling, write, draw, and color—the more you unfold aspects of yourself. For Sharron, the aspects unfolded after one of the creative journaling exercises that entailed the Who am I question:

> Who am I is a person that has the ability to do whatever I need to do for once, for myself. Who am I is do I want to stay where I used to be or do I want to be better. Who am I—do I want to live in the same environment that my mother and my grandmother only knew? Or do I want to move to a better environment? Who am I—am I afraid to change or am I afraid to just stay where I am at? Who am I is who am I to love. If I can't love myself, how can I love somebody else? And, now: Who am I is learning to love myself. That's it. (Sharron)

In this one explanation, Sharron threaded her personal notion of Who am I through her past, current, and future stances of she who is, ending with the important notion of loving self. Loving yourself first requires prioritizing—making yourself a priority amid your own life and focusing on who you are as an individual person. Coming to the table for a

creative journaling pause is a deliberate action of coming to the table to sit while taking a moment—a moment to engage with just being, just being one's self.

> Fundamental to the transformational power of journal writing is an inevitable movement toward a Center within ourselves—a Center that is love and that changes everything. …This is a love that requires no rule book, no "shoulds" and "should nots," no worry about right and wrong. This is love as natural as breathing. This is a love that feels like coming home. (Nelson, 2004, pp. 73-74)

Coming to the table is a decision that allows us to prioritize ourselves, which opens a moment for us to center ourselves and lovingly cultivate who we are as we sit at the table of a creative journaling pause for just a moment, just for a moment to come home to ourselves.

Sitting at the Table

> Persons matter at the table. (Capon, 1967/2011, p. 170)

Coming home is triggered by different things, situations or actions. From Old English *hamcyme*, homecoming means a return (https://www.etymonline.com). T.S. Eliot (1943/1971) asserts, "Home is where one starts from" (p.18), and Casey (1993/2009) adds, "it is also where one returns to in a journey of homecoming (p. 274). For the purposes of this study, coming home is a return to the self. When we enter a creative journaling pause, we provide ourselves with a moment to come home to ourselves. For instance, the study participants were asked to each imagine herself as an adult sitting at the table with herself as a little girl to discuss who they are in the present and who they would like to be in the future. Dianne indicates, "I guess what's the most memorable assignment, I pretty much had a ball with all of them …but the one that stood out to me was the one where we were sitting at the table, and it was you as child and you as yourself [now]…I love that because that really made you think. I enjoyed that one." And,

for the most part, after this exercise, the women were in touch with and reminded of who they were from the core or center of themselves.

Returning to our childhood selves can be a return to who we were before becoming a female impersonator as mentioned in chapter four. The amazing thing is that if we allow ourselves moments to find our way back to ourselves in the current life we live, we allow ourselves to prepare for the moments of the future, giving ourselves the ability to a) think about, b) create, and c) make any changes we deem necessary to insure we are our authentic selves—being who we are, as we want to be—despite external influences that may directly or indirectly aim to change us.

> The biggest indicator, actually, of who you are going to be after 60 is who you were when you were 8 or 9 or 10 [years old]. Does that make sense? I mean the feminine role hasn't quite hit you yet. …so you're still climbing trees and saying I know what I want and know what I think because it's your last clear-eyed moment before you become a female impersonator. (Steinman, 2017, 1:11:16)

For the participants, I noticed that this creative experience of sitting with themselves as little girls helped to usher them into a space or spaces that opened a position for centering, or focusing, on themselves (see Appendix O and Appendix P). It offered a moment and allowed each woman to place herself in a position to see herself as she centers herself on her own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Within each creative journaling pause, they seemed to want to express themselves authentically; and, I needed them to sit with themselves in an authentic way.

Through my love for the participants, I not only wanted their participation for the study's sake, but I also wanted their participation to mean something personal to them as they participated in this creative journaling pause experience. So, the first thing I needed to establish was an understanding that whenever we came to sit at the creative journaling

table, we came with the intention to focus or center ourselves on ourselves. In other words, sitting at the table is a deliberate and personal pause within our own lives. Secondly, I needed each woman to be comfortable with sitting down with herself while remaining in an inner dialog with and about herself to insure she continually occupied a space which settled her into who she is as individual person in the world with others. Coming and sitting at the table indicates she matters not only to herself, but also to another (myself as researcher). She is the creative journaling pause; and, the creative journaling pause is her. It is an experience in which she and the pause are one. It is an experience where she can pause, while she breathes and often smiles about who she is as an individual (Gach, 2018). She is the pause, and the pause is her. I am the pause, and the pause is me.

To Pause

> Pausing opens up space, within. Given space, we can incline toward intentionality, an intention-based lifestyle, establishing how we want to live in the world. (Gach, 2018, p. 19)

In thinking back through the years, some individuals have made fun of my need to take a moment to pause before expressing myself. In some conversations, the pauses were inconvenient and awkward, and they (the individuals in conversation with me) would silently deem me as a non-contributor to the discussion by changing the conversation and/or interjecting their own thoughts. My pausing was a conversation consumer; it took away and/or held up space that kept the continuous flow of a conversation from flowing. In those moments, it seemed my pausing was meaningless and/or a waste of time, regardless of how much space it gave me to collect my thoughts

to prepare and share my thoughts as an intentional reflective thinker. In those moments, I felt like an outsider looking in.

Interestingly, at times, those pausing memories have caused me to question the beauty of pausing, even when I know it is beneficial to who I am as a communicator and as my authentic self. Even as I was worked on this dissertation, I wondered if my emphasis on pausing was overrated. I know I am not the only one who has encountered this type of experience. We each play the role of the person who has paused at some point in life; and, we each play the role of that person who has become impatient when another pauses for their own needs, forgetting that person has a need for space too. Therefore, when I recognize that my thinking about pausing is faltering or has faltered, I encourage myself to push past it and disallow it from hindering my next moment or moments in life. I know I can no longer let this historical feeling prejudice me any longer about whether to take a pause—or not. It is essential to work my way through the feeling, knowing that that the historical part(s) of myself may always be present. Therefore, it is up to me, and many others, to allow a pause to guide us beyond our past and present selves into the future of our selves—being true and staying authentic to who we are as individuals.

> In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being. (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 288-89)

For me, the historical part of life that is often forgotten, but then, from time-to-time remembered requires management. The type of management required is filled with inspirational things of our external selves. For instance, after writing chapters one

through three, defending my proposal, completing my study, and transcribing the conversations, I encountered a new book. This book—*Pause, Breathe, Smile* (Gach 2018)—gave me an additional nod, a sign of affirmation, that there are others who feel and know the importance of pausing in and about our lives. Whether I am pausing in conversation or pausing to create via a creative journaling experience, like Sharron, the pause and my experience of pausing are essential to my livelihood.

> You know: You get more moments now than you have ever gotten before in our olden time [or olden years]. …where you keep growing, and you keep learning about yourself. And, you keep making yourself better than you ever have been before. So, you take those pauses of those journals. I take those pauses of those journals; and, I discover each individual person. I discovered the shapes I was in; I could even tell when one was popping up, when the other was sitting back. But I learned the most important part, that main character—which was that one—that became, all of them became as one was that myself was there no matter what it was. So, I'm pausing now to nourish and to love and to really accept that I have these things in me as a part of my life and a part of a journal and a journey that I must go through next. (Sharron)

For Sharron, pausing is a way to nourish, love, and accept herself from the inside out in the present moment. As Gach (2018) asserts, "We can always pause, to be conscious and intentional, connecting throughout the day" (p. 29) in the current moment. Like each breath I take to breathe, I pause to give way to myself—opening space to connect to myself, grounding myself in who I am. It does not matter if the pause is one I create or one that is created by situations in life.

As educators and facilitators who often incorporate moments of pause into our lessons and workshops, we must remember that the meaning and feeling of pausing is relative. Each person has a history with it. To pause is to open ourselves, in opening ourselves we experience various feelings (happiness, sadness, grief, joy, etc.) that unfold within a simple moment of just pausing and just being with ourselves alone or in the

presence of others. We must recognize that a resistance to pausing is not necessarily a refusal to pause. Resistance is not always someone not wanting to do something; it can also be someone not being sure of what may happen if something is done. The resistance is fear—the fear of being open. Therefore, methods of returning to oneself, like centering, helps in the preparation and practice of pausing. Centering helps to refocus one's self into an understanding that my personal experience of pause within any particular moment is real, my own, and an intentional way to help me be free to be authentically me.

To Re-Center

> …I believe the issue of female inferiority still arises for virtually every woman growing up in this society. I grew up in an environment where no one told me females were inferior or that significant achievement would necessarily be beyond my reach, but the belief was all around me. … I have slighted my own value so often that it is hard to learn to take it seriously. Instead, I get things done by finding rationales for valuing the task and then sacrificing myself for it. And all of this is available as a bad model for the next generation. … If women were brought up to be more centered on themselves, many of the conflicts and discontinuities that disrupt their lives would be irrelevant, peripheral to the central definition of self. (Bateson, 1989, p. 39-41)

Bateson (1989) asserts, "To be effectively centered is to affirm the existence of an internal gyroscope, to believe of oneself that *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*" (p. 41), the more things change, the more they say the same. The gyroscope is "a device consisting of a spinning mass, typically a disk or wheel, mounted on a base so that its axis can turn freely in any direction" and "maintain its orientation regardless of any movement of the base" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2002, p. 620). In some ways, the participants of this study emulate the effect of the gyroscope when participating in a creative journaling pause. For instance, by engaging in the creative journaling pause activities, Sunflower recognized that a piece of herself had been lost over the years and she was inclined to find the missing piece.

> I've really started thinking about it since I've been in this process with you. You know: I went back, and I found some old poetry that I submitted to this website on line. And, I put it all together. And, …it was like about 8 or 9 poems. And I said, I'm going to write 30 more. And, I'm going to write one for every year I've been alive. And, I just put it down. But even with the fact that I started thinking about it, like I went, and I found it. I was looking through my Google drive, and I found a book that I started writing at work. And, it was about 30 pages; and, I'm like when did I do this? Yeah! I was saying, "When did I even do this?" It's like I completely put all of that stuff out of my mind. So, I don't know. I don't know where it is on the pathway. But I think for me to get back to the person I was before, I'm not saying who I am now is bad, but I feel like I've lost sight of a big part of me. And, I think to get back there, I need to [Sunflower pauses] get back to the parts I lost that were still good. You know: I let go a lot of good parts of me, so that I would be able to take in the new things I had to learn and things I had to do; and, I want to be able to get back the good parts and not lose them. (Sunflower)

Though years have passed and she has played various roles in life, Sunflower's desire to create was still a part of who she is as an individual. The more she changed, the more she stayed the same. The creative element of her being is specific to who she is as an individual person. Taking a moment to participate in a creative journaling pause helped Sunflower to acknowledge and find the "good" parts of herself. Sitting at the table to participate in a creative journaling pause allows you to return to the base of who you are no matter how many directions, tilts, and turns you have encountered in life. The center of who you are remains intact, always waiting for you to access it at any given moment in your life. The key is to access it consistently, while remembering what Beckwith (2012) asserts, "What we 'should' be is pumped into us from outside sources. What we are meant to be is already living at our center" (p. 154). Like Sunflower, as we focus our thoughts on ourselves while doing activities like creative journaling, we allow ourselves the ability to re-center our lives based on who we are authentically and creatively, not according to any "should be" notions as defined by others. Living from the center opens the various possibilities of creating the life we are purposed to live.

To Create

> The tragedy, of course, is that most of us have never thought of ourselves as artists. Most of us live our lives convinced that we are uncreative. Most of us have spent our lives admiring those who have the gift of creativity while seeing our role as simply celebrating their uniqueness. … Yet what humanity needs most is for us to set creativity free from this singular category of the extraordinary and release it into the hands of the ordinary. Creativity should be an everyday experience. Creativity should be as common as breathing. We breathe, therefore we create. (McManus, 2015, pp. 4-5)

McManus (2015) asserts, "True creativity does not come easily; creativity is born of risk and refined from failure" (p. 8). This assertation summarizes an essential component of developing a creative journaling activity for others participating in a creative journaling pause. Therefore, I do not suggest that an educator or facilitator of any kind implement journaling activities unless they understand this component. The experience of creating is not monolithic. Creativity lives within the terms of flexibility, fluidity, and the ordinary. For instance, either before or during the creative journaling pause, the women of this study determined the extent of their creativity based on their ability and their mood, their talent for creating and/or their disposition or attitude toward creating—ordinary, or common, ways of bringing forth. In addition, each participant decided how creative she wanted or needed to be in order to convey her internal thought(s) concerning the topic of each session. With these elements, being creative was not intimidating. Though, I must also remind us that for this study all the women were writers of some sort; and, so, most of the women used their talent in some form of creativity, such as drawing, painting, sewing, etc. They were not intimidated with the ability to create and/or the ability to express themselves creatively. Yet, even with this creatively inclined group of women, I had to make sure each session offered a space of individuality—a space where each woman could create a journal pages based solely on

her need and/or desire to express a particular point about herself during the time where we were together.

From the beginning, the women knew that coming to sit at the table meant some form of creativity was required. So, the issue of whether they would create or attempt to create was not an issue. The underlining assumption was always, "I can create something, I will create something." For all intents and purposes, it was a creative journaling pause study. So, this understanding was made clear via the invitation to the study as well as the consent form that informed the participants about the creative journaling pause activities. Yet, the extent of their creativity was up to them; and, as facilitator, it was my job to make sure the environment of the creative journaling pauses allowed for this freedom always. The terms of risk and refinement concerning their engagement with each creative task was within their own creative control. It was imperative for them to have creative control because, as I believe and McManus asserts, any activity that involves some form or any form of creativity requires some form of vulnerability, in which risk and the potential for failure are in the midst.

With creative control, a person has the ability to minimize and/or maximize the amount of risk and failure they are willing to exhibit and/or take while completing a creative journaling activity. For each person, creating seems comfortable and less challenging if based on their individual needs and personal desires. For instance, in the following statements, each woman in the study spoke about their thoughts of what it means to create or bring forth. Their statements, some long and some short, speak to how each participant allows herself to define and pursue her own, individual way of creating within the implicit and/or explicit depths of risk and failure. Yet, as presented in their

own words, they each had their own ordinary, everyday, way of addressing and handling whatever the experience of creating brought their way.

> Belle: Because I'm a creative person, creativity is at my core. I don't like to be put in a box, and [be told] you have to do it this way. Just give me the instructions and let me just figure it out, which is pretty much what I've done my whole life. Like if something happens, "Oh." I'll just figure it out. You know: If it works it works, if doesn't, it doesn't. Just move on to the next thing.

> Dianne: One of my biggest fears was sharing. …it was the fear of not being able to express, um, what I was really trying to say or feel. And, also, too, in doing the assignments, there was a fear because it was like, … oh, I really want to express this this way, and I really wanted you to get what I was feeling inside and trying to express …and, I kind of felt like time was hindering that. Because I was like, I going to run out of time; and, I'm in this timeframe; and, I'm forced to try and hurry up and convey this feeling or mood in this certain amount of time; and, I'm like "Am I going to be able to make it like the way I want it to look?" So, that's a fear, where you're like, ah man, would Sonya Marie ask us to share? and, I was thinking to myself: They are going to be looking at my stuff, and, be like, what in the world is that? Even though people may not say it, it's that fear that people are looking like, "Hmm?" And, it's also the fear, too, of when you're sharing and then other people they're stuff up and you're like Ah man, that's beautiful. That's wonderful. Look how nice that is! [Dianne laughs] and, then, you think to yourself—Are people, oh God, is mine really all that? You know, that kind of makes me feel that way too. I was looking at some of the stuff some of the ladies did and I was like, oh wow. I wish I had thought of that. But I was like I didn't think of it that way, you know. What you thought of in that moment, sometimes can be kind of scary when you have to share it with everybody else.

> Marsha: … creative journaling, I think it just gives, um, I'm going to say it this way: We came here [to earth] with an assignment, right? It's up to us to discover what the assignment is. It's kind of like the creative journaling process, I'm seeing now, it's almost like drawing a picture. You know, you stretch the outline first, big picture. Then, each time you go back, there's more detail. Whether there's addition of color, addition of face, if you will, it's clarifying. It's an opportunity to clarify. Um, you have to sacrifice for it. … It's the [chuckle] getting it out of the head and putting it down to look at; and then, saying it's worth it for me to look at this [my life], again.

> Orchid: It's fun to create. So, energizing. So, it's fun. I was thinking about like when I'm creating a retreat experience for other people. And, I'm thinking about all these little cool activities to do with them, using crayons or their going to do a craft or you know; and, that's just really. I just get really jazzed by that. And then when I have a chance to do it myself. For me, I get that same feeling of

> excitement; and, I wonder what's going to come out of this, like anticipation almost.
>
> Sharron: What I like about creative journaling [is] …There's no rules of negative; there's no rules of positive. It's all about you. It's what you're feeling, what you're dealing with, what is happening to you. I say what is happening to Sharron. Everything I wrote is what's happening to Sharron. The only person that is in this little environment circle is me. And, it wasn't negative. It wasn't. I can say now because at first when I go back to read it, I thought I was complaining, I was whining.
>
> Sunflower: I think for me it really depends on what we use as source for this thought process. I think that I have a better time coming to journaling when I'm like reading a piece, than just sitting and having to come up with my own focus. So, for instance, the activity with the poem was much easier for me to sit down and be like, these are my thoughts as I was reading the poem; and then, this is how I see these thoughts relating to me versus the activity where I had to draw an image of myself. That was challenging for me because I had to find… I had to define that myself. I didn't have a parameter, you know, set and … it was vague. So, I had to sit and figure out: How do I want to approach it? And, come up with my own process of how I want to do it; and, then do it that way. So, it was a little bit more challenging.

Each statement brings personal meaning to "releasing creativity to the ordinary" (McManus, 2015), allowing each person to define and pursue her own, individual way of creating while addressing issues of risk and/or fear. In their own words, the participants did not center on the extraordinary elements of talent and/or the confines of creating as a result of any type of societal norm. I believe these aspects allowed them the ability to create on their own terms and personal ability coupled with the instruction of the activity.

To Keep A Creative Journal

> The Creative Journal is not a closed method, but an open-ended creative approach that continues to grow with different applications. … If you think you're untalented or uncreative, some of these expressive forms might put you off. Take heart. You need no special talent or training in the arts to do these exercises. The goal is not to make art or literature, but to explore the self. You are not drawing or writing to please anyone else, to get approval, or to meet externally imposed standards of aesthetics. Remember, the journal is by you, for you. The only critic you have to deal with is yourself. (Capacchione, 2015, pp. 5-6)

Capacchione (n.d.) states, “In Creative Journaling, art is used as a vehicle for emotional and spiritual expression and a means to gain insight into one’s life. The emphasis is on the process and the inner journey, not on the visual and esthetic result or effect” (para. 9). This point is not the easiest to comprehend. Usually, for those who inquire about this method, the result of a creative journaling session is what most want to see and hear about. As highlighted in chapter one, it is not that this aspect is not important—It is. As a result of my creative journaling pauses, I create poetry; the poetry documents a thinking through, a natural cultivation of tending to my feelings about a particular life event or lived experience. However, the emphasis is the process and the inner journey of the person participating in the creative journaling experience, not the visual result (Capacchione, 2015).

For this study, when the women spoke of their creative journaling experiences, they spoke of their inward feelings or thoughts. The creative results of the activity—their drawings and/or complied images and writings—were mentioned on occasion during our conversations. However, if a participant did not mention her journal contents, I did not inquire about it unless it was a factor in understanding her creative journaling pause experience. The Capacchione (2015) quote above reminds us that in creative journaling, “the goal is not to make art or literature, but to explore self” (p. 6). This exploration of self can evoke, clarify, and acknowledge what one feels.

As each woman spoke about her lived experiences of the creative journaling pause itself, she spoke of how she felt and explored what the feelings revealed in the space of those moments. This thought reminds me of the verse “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (KJV, Proverbs 23:7). Through exploring self, we cultivate self.

Exploration allows us to discover and rediscover who we are at the core of ourselves, exposing areas to cultivate or nurture. When we cultivate, we take care of that which exists. Heidegger (1971) states, "…to cultivate the vine. Such building only takes care—it tends the growth that ripens into its fruit of its own accord. Building in the sense of preserving and nurturing is not making anything" (p. 147). It is not starting from scratch, but recognizing that the core of who we are already exists. In other words, we are who we are even if we do not already recognize ourselves.

The creative journaling process aided each woman in cultivating her inner journey about, for, and toward herself. When speaking of children and teens, Capacchione (2015) suggests, "The Creative Journal Method has been shown to develop emotional literacy" (p. xiii), "the ability to speak, understand, and communicate using the language of emotions" (p. xiii). However, with this study, I would venture to say that it also helps adult women to develop their emotional literacy further, especially after years of neglecting how they feel to tend to the needs of others. For instance, I asked each participant the question, How do you define creative journaling? And, each woman responded with an answer anchored in a way of expression, an action of pressing out or expressing who they are from the inside out.

In sitting at the table to take a creative journaling pause, each woman allowed creative journaling to connect her to herself, to express herself from the center of the self we each call Myself, or I myself. Myself is always present with who we are as individuals; I myself is the core of our being; I myself is *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962). In keeping a creative journal, I myself is revealed. As Sunflower states in chapter four, "Creativity is different for everybody. …There's something about color and using

different materials that takes away some of the barriers you have in your mind. You can just **express** stuff." Similarly, Capacchione (2015) writes, "Along with facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, the arts are the language of emotions" (p. xiii). The arts allow for the space of creativity and the space to just be in the form needed to express our authentic selves. As shown in chapter four, the participants responses were especially insightful.

Belle: Creative Journaling reflects self.

Belle: Creative journaling would be expressing yourself in various ways. And, for me, again, it goes back to Instagram. That's how I **express** myself. Well, that's how I display my creativity.

Sonya: So, the key word is display, [Belle, background acknowledgement sounds] display your creativity?

Belle: [whispered] and share.

Sonya: and sharing. Okay. So, my question to you is: Does displaying creativity mean displaying yourself?

Belle: Right, because it's a reflection of me. It is me. Yeah.

Dianne: Creative journaling expresses the visual that is inside of you.

Dianne: Creative journaling is, I define it as a mixture of words and images that you convey, that you're feeling about what has been read to you or what the assignment is telling you to do. I would also say, too, creative journaling to me, is a time to express inner thoughts and feelings visually. Like I said visual, I have been visual my entire life. Sometimes I think if teachers would tap into that we'd have a lot more response from students because like I said, all my life I've been a visual learner. And, I love …when I was a kid… I told you we went to the Christian school. Girl, when [my teachers] brought out that giant felt board, I was like in seventh heaven. I was like *woo* [an expression of excitement] when they brought out that felt board to do the Bible stories.

Sonya: Me too. I loved that felt board.

Dianne: Girl, I said God, "I'm going to find one or I'm going to make one." I was like in seventh heaven when they [my teachers] would tell us stories and they would put those images up. Awesome! Love it! Love it! Love it! And, I'm like, I have to find me a felt

board or make one. I'm going to start doing that for my boo boos [an endearing phase referring to her nieces and nephews].

Sonya: Aw, they would love that!

Dianne: … So, visuals are really big for me. It's like a chance. Creative journaling is like a chance to **express** the visual that's inside of you, to get it out.

Marsha: Creative Journaling allows communication and exploration.

Marsha: How do I define creative journaling? The creative part is just allowing, with or without instruction, allowing your mind to explore a given question in using tools whether it be colors or techniques, such as whether it's the Haiku or poetry or a play on words and language to communicate and explore a question.

Orchid: Creative Journaling is any method of recording your thoughts.

Orchid: Creative Journaling is, "You can use any means to record your thoughts." That to me is the essence of it. So, it could be writing just straight prose; it could be writing a prayer; it could be writing a song, it could be drawing. It could be making something, I mean a craft, it could be creative journaling, couldn't it? [laughs]

Sonya: Yeah, quilting, right?

Orchid: Yeah, or even like, um, I'm even thinking: … I had some rocks, you know, like river stones. They were bought from a store. I was going to go out and collect them from the yard, but I was like no that might be too much. So, I brought them from the store; and, I forget what Scripture I used. I think it was in Joshua, when the priest crossed the Jordan and they built the alter because God parted the Jordan River.

Sonya: I think I know what you're talking about

Orchid: They got 12 stones and they built the alter.

Sonya: I have to read it again.

Orchid: …So my little craft was on my rock; I had written strength and juggling. And, I have a bowl on my desk of stuff I collect when I go on my nature walks. Sometimes, I'll glue them together and create a little craft of something that reminds me of my time with God. So, I've got my little rock that says "strength" and "juggling" on it, to remind me how God got me through … So, to me, that's creative journaling.

Sonya: It really is because of the notes.

Orchid: Even though I wrote something on it, I didn't have to write. I don't think I had to write anything on it. Even if it were was just painting, so, maybe it is. Maybe there is some form of writing or …

Sonya: Imagery, really.

Orchid: Imagery, yeah.

Sonya: Even if you had the rocks put together [in an arrangement], it's your creative image.

Orchid: Yeah. Because I've painted sticks with, you know, symbols from a Scripture text or something you know. So, I think any method of recording your thoughts, yeah.

Sharron: Creative Journaling is a creative journey.

Sharron: Creative Journaling is a creative journal, a journey. I had a journal, now I have a journey. Now, I got to be creative with my journey, from my journal, that I've been through. [Both Sharron and Sonya make sounds of approval.]

Sonya: We both said it together. That's like … that was good!

Sharron: It just came, just that—that inner myself is coming out. [chuckles]

Sonya: Where is it on the tape, so I can find it [chuckles from both Sonya and Sharron]. Yeah, that was good. It's a creative journey. Alright, talk to me more about this creative journey. Is it the writing? Is it the drawing? Is it the thinking? What is it?

Sharron: It is all that and plus the acting and the sharing and the giving.

Sonya: The acting; the sharing; and the giving. Alright, you know you're going to have to break that down.

Sharron: Break that down. It is as simple, as plain as ABC. From writing, I'm walking it. I'm talking it. I'm sharing with others. I understand. I'm able to relate to other people. Instead of saying, "Oh no, I got to keep this to myself." That's being selfish. I'm going out to be grateful to show other people that you can overcome. So, that is my journey. In my journal, I kept everything secretly, even from myself.

Sonya: Okay, so does that mean now your physical journal, the book that we're writing in can be open?

Sharron: Yes

Sonya: So, you're willing to share
.

Sharron: How would they know? I'm not an artist, but my little sticks in my book are okay.

Each woman defined creative journaling with an understanding that the process of journaling creatively, or not, starts with herself. Her internal thoughts are expressed outward, pushed into the earth realm. Participating in a creative journaling pause allows the participant to keep a creative journal that cultivates herself through various forms of expression as needed within the course of life.

To Pray

> Prayer is earthly license for heavenly interference. The heart of prayer is asking God to intervene in the world to fulfill His eternal purposes for [humankind]. (Munroe, 2002/2018, p. 185)

A creative journaling pause provides the moment for a woman to sit in the presence of the divine, the one whom she calls God. For the Christian woman, God is her Heavenly Father, the one to whom she prays or communes, discussing her life. Each woman of this study would have brought this aspect to the table even if the *Lectio Divina* component was not a part of the creative journaling exercises. The table was no holds barred. There were no restrictions for what may be discussed concerning their creative journaling pauses as long it was respectful (or not demeaning to others) and honest. With this open understanding, faith was welcomed at the table. The women seemed comfortable in expressing every aspect of themselves, even the part of themselves that was not pleasant to themselves. For instance, below are statements made at different times of the study concerning the participants revealing areas of their lives that expose a negative aspect of themselves.

> … sometimes you have to read over that too. …I kind of took a break from venting feelings. ...I think it's beneficial to go over that stuff too because it does kind of give you areas you may need to pray over in your life, but then it can also

> be a hindrance at times too, looking back over sad things that have happened. (Dianne)

> That's interesting. In terms of, it's a, there's a part of me that wants to be like God and keep a record of what you've grown from; but, then there's our cultural context. I don't know where everyone is from, but, you know, especially as women of African descent, it's you don't put your business out there. And, so in finding your truest expression of yourself—I mean your real hurts; your use of not so nice language. [Marsha chuckles and pretends to faint; the group laughs] It's like someone finding and touching that. It's like it's sacred. …I like it, to get it from someone else, but if I had to open myself up while alive. [People will be like] she did that? … I sure did. And, I'll probably do it again. (Marsha)

> …What came to my mind and what I have experienced is: Sometimes you know what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you. But you don't really want to hear it because you're so busy [group laughter]. [Orchid changes her voice.] Okay, I hear you. [Orchid ends her change of voice.] So, I think, for me sometimes, when I know that He's trying to say something to me about something I need to do differently or to convict me about, you know, an attitude I have that's not right or something. So, when you pause, then there's no distraction, so you can't help but listen; and, so, for me there's some fear about what He's trying to tell me. You know. Because, we don't like to have people we love tell us that we're doing something wrong. [Group: laughter of agreement.] And I'm a people pleaser too. You know: I'm a pleaser, and I want to please God. And, if I'm not pleasing Him, then [Orchid changes her voice] No don't tell me. I don't want to hear it. No, no, don't say it [Orchid changes her voice back], like that. (Orchid)

On the other hand, below are statements of some of the women just talking about God, communicating and hearing from God, during a creative journaling pause. They are expressing their comfortability with sitting and communing with the divine.

> Probably now, I do more journaling, when an issue or issues come up, and, it is more to just get it out. And having a safe place to get it out. And, then, trusting and knowing that the Holy Spirit will give me something to help deal with whatever that particular thing is. … I do feel like it is a great tool. Journaling is a great tool, to help manage that. I found some of my older journals—relationship stuff and questions from God or questioning God about things and how I process those things. Yeah, that's my experience. (Marsha)

> My journal is not my journal; it's God's purpose for what I have to do for what he wants me to do. So, there shouldn't be a secret because there is a purpose and honor for his people—the just and the unjust. So, whatever I say, I say. Whatever I have been through, I've been through. I still stand because of who I am in Christ Jesus; and, that's all that matters. (Sharron)

> I liked the My Life History: A Timeline. Because it was interesting to reflect back and to pick out memorable events at different points. Because you know: It was hard to do though, because there were a lot of different things that came up that I was focusing on the most memorable the most impactful thing from that era. It was interesting to see the positive, mostly positive, for me, mostly positive things. But, also, some negatives; and, how they have shaped, you know, who I am and how I am living my life right now. And, it was also, I think that was the most memorable because that is when I discovered the theme of adventure. …Confirming things that I knew, except for that piece about adventure. And, then, being open to change. You know: Not thinking, well oh, this is who I am; and, therefore I will not be any different. I am who I am; and, I'm not changing. But being open to God showing me, you know, giving additional light on myself and how I can, He can mold me more in His image to be of service in the world. (Orchid)

For each of these examples, the key aspect is that the women were able to express themselves as communicators with God. As educators and workshop facilitators, I feel it is imperative to allow our students and workshop participants the ability to express themselves from a faith-based perspective, if necessary. It allows for open dialog without constraints and allows the women to stand-up from the table with an understanding that each and every one of their life experiences matter in a creative journaling pause. It is where the secular and the sacred intertwine to promote the growth of the individual as a spiritual thinking being.

Leaving with the Table

> Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. … for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. … And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. (KJV, Exodus 31:15-18; 32:15-17)

Tables are places of gathering. Some tables gather our families at mealtime; some gather our words on paper; some gather conviction and covenant; and, others gather our

hopes and dreams buried deep within our heart. The table is a testimony of life lived and a promise of life to be lived. It is a place of pause that corrals a space in between surprise and desire. In other words, it is the thing that provides a place and space that intertwines the body, mind, and spirit. It is a transcending thing that can stay behind or go with us as needed.

For the most part, the word table automatically brings to mind a piece of furniture with a particular shape (round, square, or rectangular) and legs (typically four). However, in Latin, the word table is derived from *tabula* meaning "a board, plank; writing table; list, schedule; picture, painted panel, originally small flat slab or piece usually for inscriptions or for games" (https://www.etymonline.com). For this study, both definitions serve us. The table is the place where the women and I came together to participate in a creative journaling pause; and, the table is the space where we expressed our deepest feelings. The table was a piece of furniture where we sat, and a piece of board or wood pulp, turned paper, where we wrote. The table is a place and space in which to dwell, or to think during a creative journaling pause; it is the place where she continues to build and cultivate herself authentically. As a place and space to pause, the person participating in a creative journaling pause can thrive at or with a table or tables that allow her to take what she has invested and/or learned during the activities and pull from them throughout her life. Each woman is able to leave the table with additional tools and/or feelings to help with her ability to share and be her own.

To Share

> … other than our beds the table is the most intimate piece of furniture in our lives. It is at the table that we share more than bread; we share stories, share our dreams, share our very lives together. (Graves, 2017, p. 2)

Since the 1560s, the Latin phrase *colloquia mensalis,* or table talk, has been defined as "a familiar conversation around a table" (https://www.etymonline.com). For me as family person, table talk is a time to come together with family members and close friends to engage and discuss our day or a specific topic over a meal. For me as an educator, table talk is a strategy of engagement, providing "students with an opportunity to engage collaboratively with their peers to process new information, solve a problem, or complete activity" (https://www.s2temsc.org/productive-dialogue-strategies.html). This strategy does not minimize the fact that each student is held "accountable and have a shared responsibility in completing the learning task" (https://www.s2temsc.org/). It is a way of engaging the class and each student in the learning process as a community and/or as an individual. Either personally or professionally, table talk opens the avenues for engagement and relationship with others. Sitting at the table opened space for the women to not only engage within themselves, but also with others. The gathering was about the experiences surrounding a creative journaling pause, which allowed each woman the ability to affirm herself to herself and in the presence of others. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) assert, "Whomever a woman finds to turn to—social agency, female relative, girlfriend, even a nurturant boyfriend—the significant educational action is the reassurance and confirmation that 'maternal authority' provides her that she, too, can think and know and be a woman" (p. 62). For instance, during our last group gathering, three of the women—Sunflower, Orchid, and Sharron—share what it may mean to express yourself in a group. Each thing shared reminds us about particular aspects of sharing.

Sunflower reminds us that sharing is not an easy task for everyone. For some, there is a need to mask themselves as "quiet" until they feel comfortable enough to open up. In Sunflower's case, she prefers the private one-to-one session over the more public group sessions.

> I know I said when I started this that I'm not good in group settings. [Group laughter] It takes me a while to get comfortable with people and I pretend to be quiet … So, for me, I think I opened up more when it was just us one-on-one because I'm comfortable with you. Um, I mean, now I think I'm opening up more because I've met you guys before. But it was definitely easier for me to think and express when it was a one-on-one session.

Orchid reminds us that there are differences between group, individual, and one-to-one sessions. The differences lend themselves to different experiences of sharing—or not. In Orchid's case, she recognized the benefits of each.

> I think also with the group session, and even the one-on-one time, there were time constraints. So, whereas, when you're just working by yourself, you can take as long as you want on whatever, you can pick and choose whatever you want to—whatever method you want to use that particular day. So, it's just different; it's just, I liked all three, you know, because I think you learn things and hear things from others in the group setting, to help you think about things in a different way.

Sharron reminds us that the group experiences may change the way in which we see ourselves as well as others. For her, the group session experiences changed the way in which she thought herself as a woman in relation to men and other women in her life. The following is the portion of the group session with Sharron's thoughts in her own words.

> Sonya: What other questions do I have: The question I keep asking is what is a creative journaling pause? Have your thoughts changed since we first, when we first met? [Silence]
>
> Sharron: Mine has changed a lot.
>
> Sonya: Okay, how has it changed?
>
> Sharron: [Sharon giggle.] Just a lot. Even with the experience of my past, with relationships, with men, just men period—children, son, grandson.

Sonya: So, you're saying …

Sharron: … whatever, in marriages, in relationships with father and all—just men. I didn't realize how angry I really was towards them. I mean I didn't really realize it. By me knowing it now by my grandson, I realize it now, that I'm no longer angry. And, I can have that control of my life and just walk away from whether they may see, or whatever they may do, or whatever they may think. I don't let them have that power and control over me, like I didn't realize they had before. And for me, that was a very important situation because I realize, even though I didn't know at the beginning in the relationship or communication with them, but somewhere down the line, I realized what they were doing. But I allowed them to keep doing it. And I was hoping at the time I realized they were doing it, I was hoping they would see the goodness of me, as the person my grandmother had taught me to be, as a woman. And, then, I realized: I don't have to do that.

Sonya: So, this creative journaling experience was a life changing experience?

Sharron: A whole life changing, a whole life changing.

Sonya: For yourself?

Sharron: By myself, even with women. We, women, how strong we are as women. And, how we are still standing no matter what the situation; no matter how the storm, the hurricane, the earthquake, the volcano, whatever it is: We are still standing. And, I'm learning for me, how I love and respect women for who we are because we are strong; and, we have the eye of God upon us, and that we're still standing no matter who we are; no matter what we've done. I've learned to respect us as women, which I didn't see that before, you know. I mean: I can call it anything; I can call it racist, I can call it prejudice, I can call it whatever I want. But I don't see that anymore, of that kind of view that I had—that what I was seeing of them, I would see in myself. …and, I don't see that in myself anymore. I see the beautiful person that I am, and I see every woman as a beautiful person. No matter what they do; no matter what they are. What I see in me, I see in them.

Sonya: Well, that blesses me just to know that experience has helped.

Sharron: It has helped with this, you know with the writing and everything because that's how I … just by writing and just taking those times and sitting and wondering and just looking, just really looking at myself. You know, just looking at the things I've been through, and just looking at how God has shown me. He said these afflictions and wounds I have placed upon you. It made me realize that they were not sin, they were wounds of growth. They were wounds of …they were afflictions of knowing that I have to do this so you will know who I am and who my son is and why he died. And, what is the purpose.

> Sonya: So, you just gave me another word … so creative journaling helps with growth.
>
> Sharron: Growth. Yes! [silence] We have a big picture in our lives—each one of us have a big picture, a beautiful picture. (See Appendix G)

Orchid, Sharron, and Sunflower remind us that creative journaling is personal; and, therefore, sharing should be considered as personal as well. During a creative journaling pause, it is essential to remember this aspect. As educators and workshop facilitators implement sharing during class or workshop time, we must remember that "each person has his or her own inner timing for moving out of the stage of gathering strength privately and into that of receiving public feedback to private effort" (Schneider, 2003, p. 194). Sharing content from a creative journal and discussing particular aspects of creative journaling pause should be optional. The participant should have a choice as to whether she will share any personal particulars—or not.

To Be Her Own

> This confusing experience reminded me of what I already knew, and strengthened my resolution never to forget that a writer must stand on the rock of herself and her judgment or be swept away by the tide or sink in the quaking earth: there must be an inviolate place where the choices and decisions, however imperfect, are the writer's own, where the decision must be as individual and solitary as birth or death. What was the use of my having survived as a person if I could not maintain my own judgment? Only then could I have the confidence to try to shape a novel or story or poem the way I desired and needed it to be, with both the imperfections and the felicities bearing my own signature. (Framer, 2010, p. 469)

In taking a creative journaling pause, the participant is making a decision to be her own. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the act of creative journaling is intentional and a solitary act of writing what is the heart and mind, our internal feelings and thoughts. As Framer (2010) asserts, "…a writer must stand on the rock of herself and her

judgment or be swept away" (p. 469). The creative journaling participant must have the same resolve when dealing with her own internal feelings and thoughts.

As a woman accepts a pause to journal, a creative journaling pause, she has made a judgment call or a decision to relinquish her current role. For a moment, she is able to access and/or re-access whether or not alterations are needed in her life. This moment of assessing is not meant to tear her down, but to build her up. As a journal writer, the judgment is not punitive or condescending. Instead, judgment is a statement for self. It is not whether feelings or thoughts are right or wrong, but whether they are conducive to who she is as a person, as an individual, as a faith-filled woman writing herself true.

> My journal is the seedbed for everything I write, the place where no judgment applies—not even my own. In order to write clearly, I have to think clearly. Working on my writing is, in a profound sense, working on myself. Everything I come to understand about myself is a deepening of the potential for my own writing, because it is an increase in wisdom, in understanding, and in the possibility of empathy, without which no writing can ever be great. (Schneider, 2003, p. 65)

Though Schneider (2003) and Framer (2010) comments are specific to writing in general, they both lend themselves to the importance of creative persons being their own individual selves to produce their own authentic works of art. Of course, as mentioned earlier, creative journaling is not focused on the result of the artwork or end product, but instead on the journey of the individual to see herself and to develop and cultivate herself as an authentic being through the process. From the first group session, the study participants, themselves, challenged the notion of creative journaling being an activity that includes a journal and drawing/writing utensils only by expanding the definition to include various means of creating to express oneself inward out. After a few comments about written versus oral expression, Sharron and Marsha engaged us in a brief

conversation about making a judgment call to how a person expresses herself creatively. Below, in their words, is the conversation.

> Sonya: So, I guess my question is: Is a journal confined to a book?
>
> Sharron: It can be, to that individual.
>
> Sonya: To that individual.
>
> Sharron: If everyone has a choice or decision of what they want to do what their life or whatever they've been through; how they want to do it, we have to, we're supposed to honor their ways of their life because it's their life, it's the shoes they walk in, not ours. So, it just depends on that individual, whatever they choose we have to honor and respect it. Dust your feet and move on.
>
> Marsha: Well, what you said reminds me of a couple of things. One is, you know, culturally as African people, our tradition is oral. Our stories are passed down orally. [Turns to talk to Sharron] So, what you shared about what you've lived, it doesn't need to be written in a book because you have given it to someone in the words, so they can continue to carry it, regardless if it's written. Being a griot is a journal, it's an oral tradition. The merit of the written and the oral I think is just our cultural context, and whether or not you decide to write it down, sometimes you don't have the place, space, the words, and you haven't quite wrestled with it yet, to give it voice either on the written page or verbally. As we know, as Children of God, our words have creative power. So, when you put it out there, you are either owning it or you're giving it, but it's going to do something. It's going to do something. What you were sharing, your story has made people free or giving them hope, it has changed their lives in some kind of way, but you gave it. You gave it; your words released. But you had to get ready or come to a place where you were even ready to talk about it.

Then, as the short conversation was ending, I made a comment, "So when journaling, we can be different—we can decide if it will be oral or written." However, Sharron and Orchid added to my comment, clarifying that confines of a journal are personal to each woman. It is not necessarily just a choice between oral and written, but it can also be an illustration and/or an emotion expressed inward out.

Sharron: Yes, what's best for you.
Sonya: So, it's just writing or speaking.
Orchid: Or drawing.
Sonya: Or drawing.
Sharron: Or screaming.
Sonya: Or screaming [group laugh].

Likewise, Diane also makes a judgment call to be her own true self in the process of creating. During both of her individual sessions, Dianne noted that even in preparing for creative moments it is essential to be her own advocate for how she creates as she mentions her "files of inspiration." The phrase is emphasized throughout the conversation, an indication of her excitement each time the phrase was spoken.

> Dianne: You know what? What's fun to me too? And, people are like: You think that's fun? What's fun to me, too, is just thinking of things I want to create and just collecting images, which I call my "files of inspiration." And, collecting images and storing them away in a folder, and, um, putting them in like a binder, in like a plastic sleeve. … fun for me is taking them out and looking through them and even though I haven't started the projects … I'm like, oh, fun for me is looking through that. I get joy out doing that. It's like extreme joy doing that. So, I get a lot of fun doing that. (First Individual Session)

> Dianne: …I'm always happy when I finish creating something, when I am in creating something. It's a positive energy. It's a happiness; and, it's also like an excitement like, "Oooh, what's next?" How can I, what can I do next? Um, that's what I told you: I had told a teacher this and she was amazed—when I tell you that I had files of inspiration, I am not kidding you. I have files of inspiration. That's what I call them, they are my files of inspiration. Some people may think I'm crazy, and you may. But see: I can't. It's only what I see. It is in my mind; and, I can't explain it to people. I see projects and things in my mind. And, it's like, I could show you something like from my files of inspiration and you'll be like, what in the world? But it's like to me, I can see it all finished. And, I can see exactly what I'm trying to accomplish with it. And, it's all—it's in the heart; and, it's in the mind. And, it's like somebody else would look at it and be like, that's just a page in a magazine, but it's so much more. I'm trying to get better with it and get on track. Because if you don't watch it, files of inspiration can lead to serious clutter. That's why I've got to start throwing some stuff away [d, laughter] but I do, I do. One day, I'll share it. I'll share some of files of inspiration with you! (Second Individual Conversation)

As I close this dissertation, Dianne with her "files of inspiration" inspires me to know that she still has lot of creative journaling pause moments to come. I am not surprised. During our first session, the question was asked, "What was it like for you to come here today? What did you experience, or what did you feel when you had to think about taking time out to pause to be a part of this?" Dianne responded, "I thought it was nice, but I've already been pausing. Doing like, creating index cards. They are like inspiration to me. You've already seen them Sonya Marie. So, that's what I've been working on. And, it soothes me to do that." Dianne has made a judgment about herself. She is a creator, who pauses and creates.

In essence, coming to the table, sitting at the table, and leaving with the table allows the creative journaling participant to pause with and for herself. A creative journaling pause gives her permission to be her own in her own way for a moment in her life. It is the interwoven fabric of the physical, mental, and spiritual revealing the authentic self though internal expressions revealed externally through the practice of creative journaling alone and/or with others.

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear [Name of Perspective Participant];

Thank you for your interest in being a part of my research study that explores the lived experience of a creative journaling pause. As you are aware, I am conducting this research as a doctoral student in the department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership (TLPL) at the University of Maryland, College Park under the guidance of my dissertation advisor Francine Hultgren, PhD.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experience of a creative journaling pause, the time used to temporarily withdraw, or retreat, from your daily course of life to create words and / or drawings that unearth the truth of *who you are*. Our resolve is to uncover and discover the lived experience of a creative journal pause. Together, as I seek to understand this experience, we will gather and engage in **four (4) creative journal pause retreats** over a five-month period, from October 2016 to March 2017. During the first few minutes of each retreat, you will be asked to write down on a 3x5 index card one thing you adore about yourself. Also, **for each retreat, you will engage in**:

- creative journaling coupled with the contemplative, or thoughtful, practices of lectio divina (using prayers, biblical scripture, and poetry), haiku, and reflective writing; and,
- open-ended conversations about the creative journaling pause.

Each conversation will focus on the experiences of a creative journaling pause. After the conversations for gatherings 1 and 2, you will receive a creative journaling reflection activity; this activity aligns with the conversation topic of the day and is to be completed prior to the next retreat.

The first and last retreat gatherings will be in a group session with the researcher and the other study participants; these retreats will last approximately 4 hours. The second and third retreat gathering will be an individual session with the researcher; these retreats will last approximately 2.5 hours. The last retreat will include a participant presentation. The retreat gathering dates will be discussed during our first retreat. All retreats will be held in the Washington DC, Virginia, and Maryland (DMV) area.

As a means to capture our experiences, I will audio record each retreat gathering. If necessary as I review and transcribe the recordings, I may request individual meetings or electronic written communication to further explore insights revealed on audio. In addition, I will ask you to read a transcript of each retreat to verify the content, to make any necessary changes, and/or to further explore the thoughts and experiences you shared during the retreats.

As a means to protect your privacy, confidentiality, and identity, you will not be identified by name in the published findings or in oral presentations, unless you choose to have your name included. You will be invited to adopt a pseudonym to be used in this study. When the research project has been completed, all audio files and transcripts will be destroyed.

Finally, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. Therefore, you may:

- end your participation at any time without penalty; and,
- decline to answer any question I ask during our conversations.

If the above information is agreeable to you, you will be asked to sign and date a consent form at our first meeting. By signing this form, you are agreeing to participate in this research study. I look forward to working with you. Your participation is appreciated and essential to the success of my study. It is my hope that this study will make an important contribution to understanding the lived experience of a creative journaling pause to unearth an answer to the question of Who am I.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at smercer1@umd.edu or by phone at 301.873.0045.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this experience with me. I look forward to your response to this invitation.

Sincerely,
Sonya M. Mercer
Principal Investigator /Doctoral Student
Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership
Department of Education
University of Maryland, College Park

APPENDIX B—CONSENT FORM

Project Title	Cultivating Our Gardens In A Pause: The Lived Experience of Women Creative Journaling.
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by **Sonya Mercer** at the University of Maryland, College Park under the guidance of Dr. Francine Hultgren. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are (a) at least 21 years of age; (b) female; (c) a writer; (d) interested in pausing to participate in various creative journaling activities alone (with herself) and in community (with others); and, (e) willing to use biblical scripture to prompt a natural or scripted pause. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the lived experience of participating in a creative journaling pause.
Procedures	The procedures involve **four (4) creative journal pause retreats** over a five-month period, from October 2016 to March 2017. During the first few minutes of each retreat, you will be asked to write down on a 3x5 index card one thing you adore about yourself. Also, **for each retreat, you will engage in**: • creative journaling coupled with the contemplative, or thoughtful, practices of lectio divina (using prayers, biblical scripture, and poetry), haiku, and reflective writing; and, • open-ended conversations about the creative journaling pause. Each conversation will focus on the experiences of a creative journaling pause, the time used to temporarily withdraw, or retreat, from your daily course of life to create words and / or drawings that unearths the truth of who you are. For this study, a conversation may begin with a question like one of the following: What memory or memories do you have about journaling throughout your life? …as a child? adolescent (pre-teen/teenager)? adult? In this concentrated amount of time, what does it feel like to allow this creative journaling pause to serve as an experience of respite in your life? • After the conversations for gatherings 1 and 2, you will receive a creative journaling reflection activity; this activity aligns with the conversation topic of the day and is to be completed prior to the next retreat. The first and last retreat gatherings will be in a group session with the researcher and the other study participants; these retreats will last approximately 4 hours. The second and third retreat gathering will be an individual session with the researcher; these retreats will last approximately 2.5 hours. The last retreat will serve as a wrap-up session and include a participant presentation. As a means to capture our experiences, each retreat gathering will be recorded using audiotape and note taking. If necessary, the researcher may request individual meetings or electronic written communication to further explore insights revealed on audio. In addition, you will be asked to read a transcript of each retreat to verify the content, to make any necessary changes, and/or to further

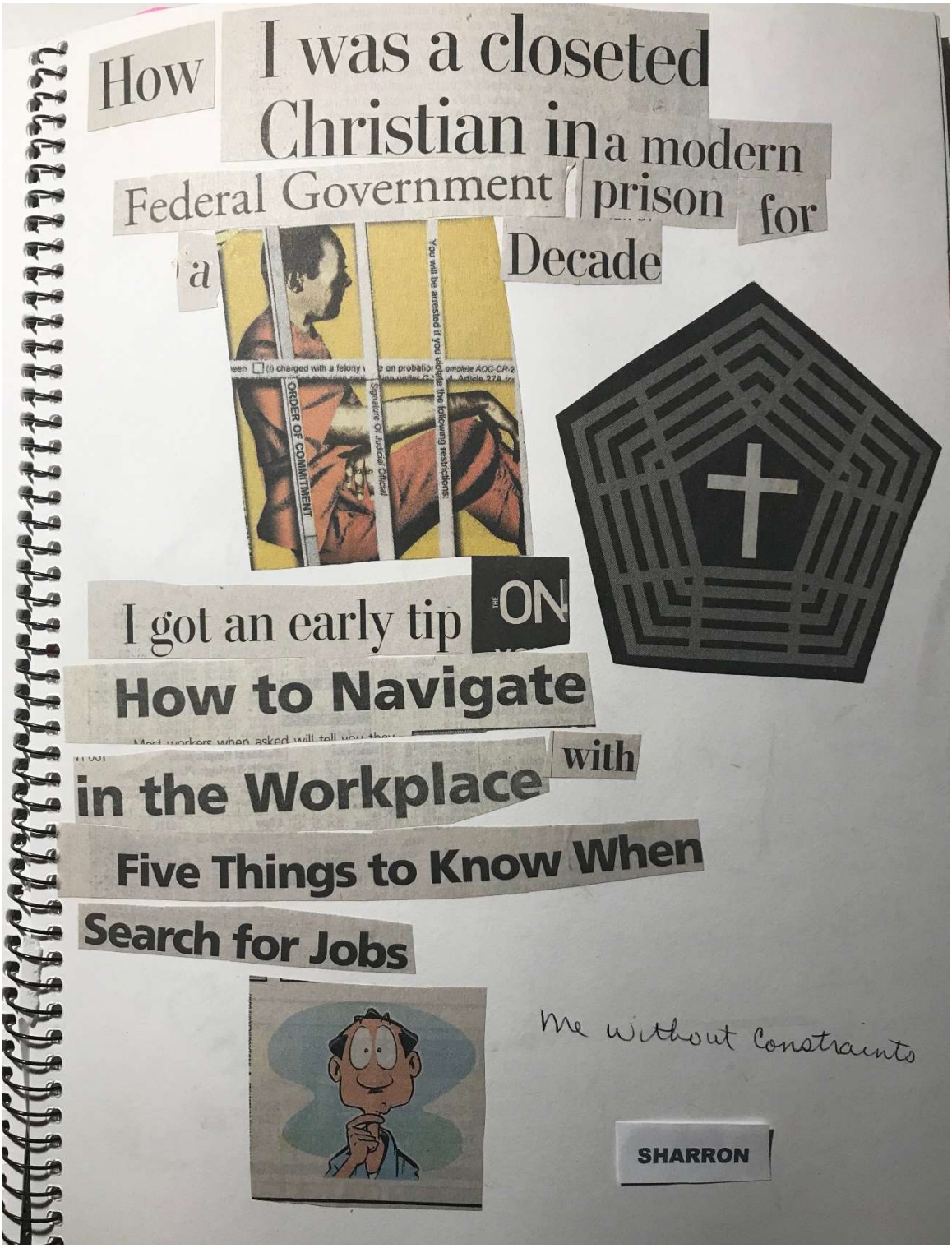
	explore the thoughts and experiences you shared during the retreats. All retreats will be held in the Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are possible risks in this research project. You may disclose personal information (i.e. 'stories' or personal anecdotes) related to your creative journaling pause experiences during the course of this study. In your creative journal or during our conversations, you may feel the need to confront the sensitive issues of race, gender, age, class, religion, ethnicity, and personal attributes. However, you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. You are in control of what you wish to share or not share. Also you may experience feelings of discomfort as a result of being recorded via audiotape. Allowing participants to review recorded discussions and conversations to make additions, corrections, and/or deletions at any time should do much to reduce the risk of discomfort. Participants may review audio-tapings after completion. You are encouraged to ask the researcher questions throughout the duration of the study and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits may include a deeper understanding of the creative journal pause experience. Our conversations may lead you to reflect more carefully and deeply about your own life in the world with others via a creative journal pause. Additionally, you will experience four creative journal pause retreats to temporarily withdraw from your daily life course and rejuvenate. Unearthing the lived experiences of women creative journal writers in a new and meaningful way is an essential contribution to educational research. This human science research will hopefully afford educators with new perspectives for encouraging females—girls and women—with meaningful opportunities to nurture themselves as life long learners and active participants in the world with others, unafraid to own their stories and to write themselves as individual woman bearing their own record.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a locked file cabinet or password protected area. For this study, stored data includes: **the interview notes**, **the interview recordings** (the audio-tape of the retreat gatherings activities and conversations), and **the journal** used for creative journaling activities, which includes practices of lectio divina, haiku, and reflective writing. • Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet or password protected area. • Only the principal investigator will have access to the data. • The data will be stored in the principal investigator's home office and used as discussed in the informal consent process "Potential Benefits" section.

	• Collected data—interviews (notes and recordings) and copies of the haiku, reflective writings, and selected journal entries will be destroyed at the completion of the research project/study. **Initial** your decision to be audiotaped. _____I agree to be **audiotaped** during my participation in this study. _____I do not agree to be **audiotaped** during my participation in this study. • It is not the intent of the researcher to destroy the creative journal. This journal will be returned to the participant at the end of the study. • On the beginning pages of your creative journal, you will be asked to disclose your age and first name in writing. The name and age collection is only for the purposes of classifying the data. If you prefer, a pseudo name may be used. If a pseudo name is used, this name will be used throughout the study. **Initial** your decision below to use or not use a pseudo name. _____ I <u>will not</u> use a pseudo name for this study. _____ I <u>will</u> use a pseudo name for this study. My pseudo name is: _____. • If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. The name you choose to use for study—either first name or pseudo—will not be disclosed in the research. o For the purposes of published research, you will be named after a flower—such as Rose or Dandelion or Sunflower—to further protect your identity. • In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others. • Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Medical Treatment	The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research,

	you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Dr. Francine Hultgren 2311B Benjamin Building, University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742-1115 Phone: (301) 405-4501 E-mail: fh@umd.edu Sonya Mercer 2117 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742-1115 Phone: (301) 873-0075 E-mail: smercer1@umd.edu	
Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **University of Maryland College Park** **Institutional Review Board Office** **1204 Marie Mount Hall** **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.	
Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]**	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

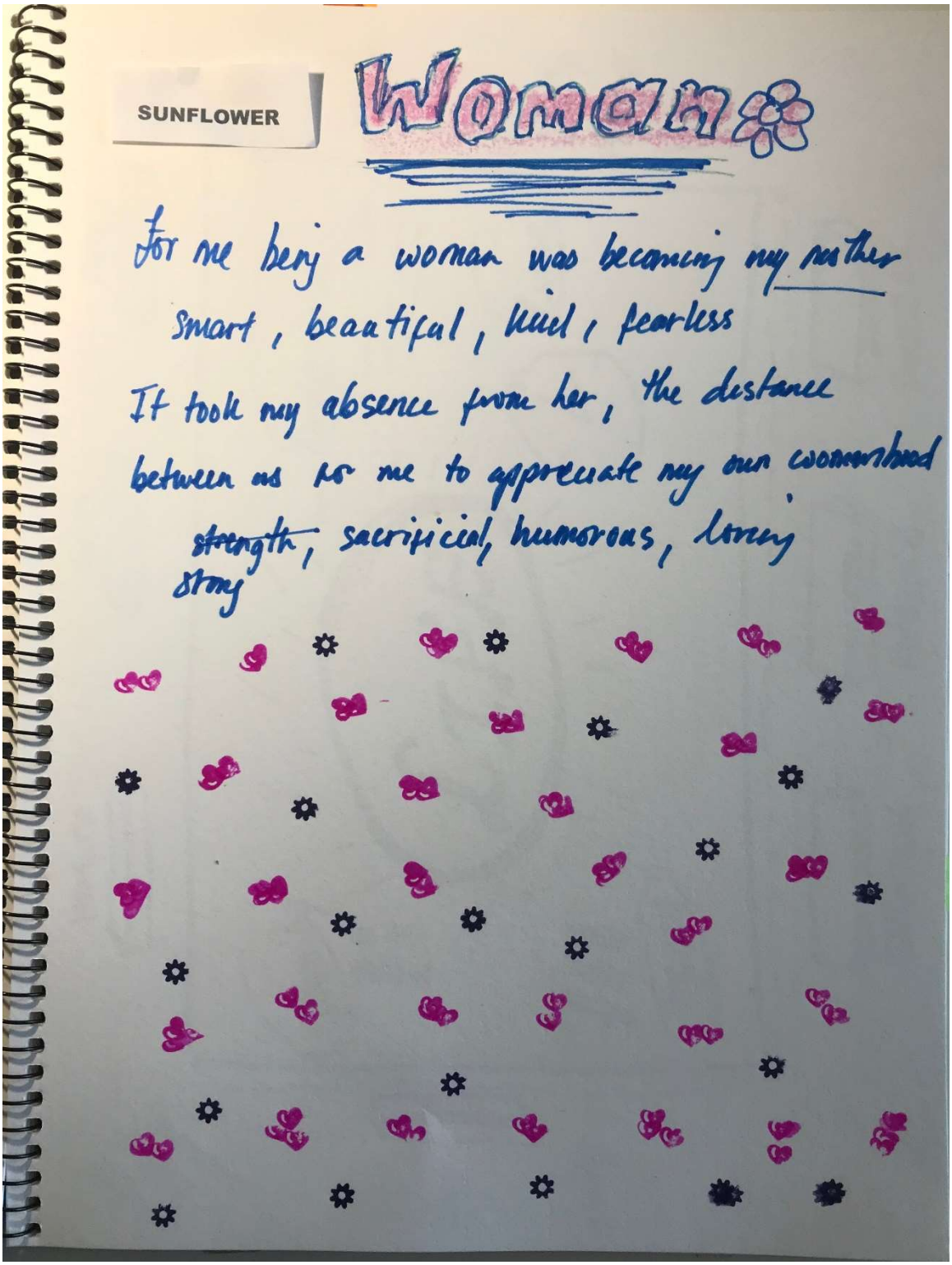
APPENDIX C

Sharron_Incarceration and Education Reference

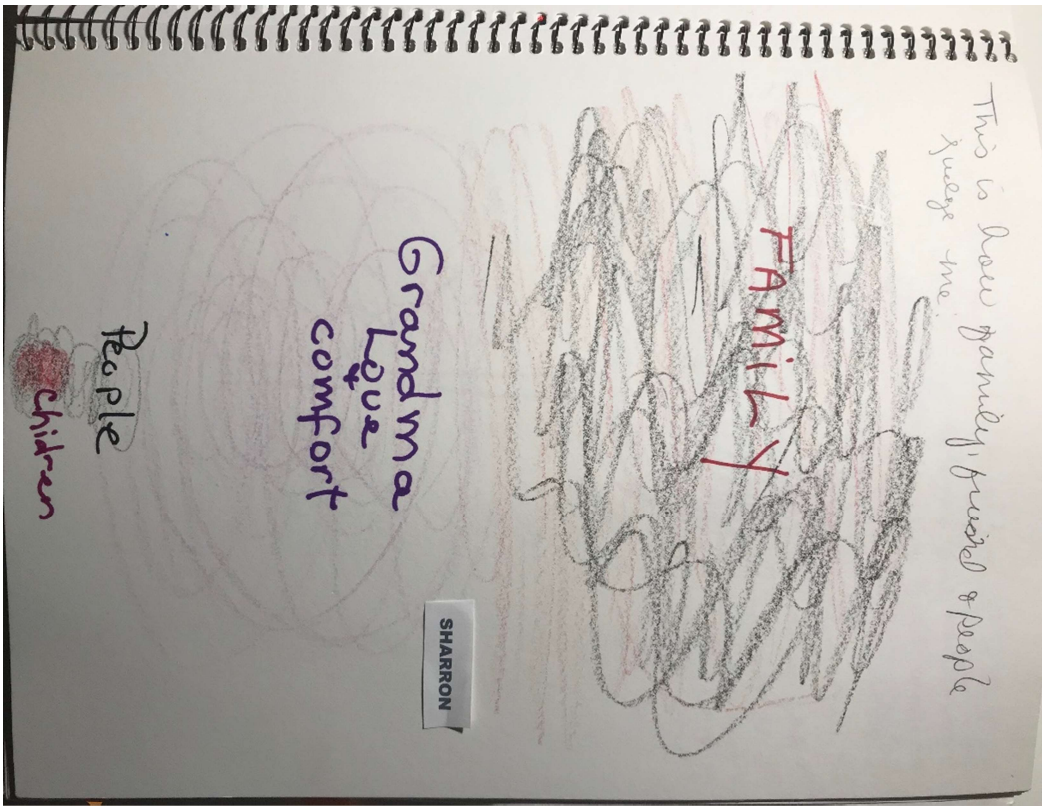


APPENDIX D

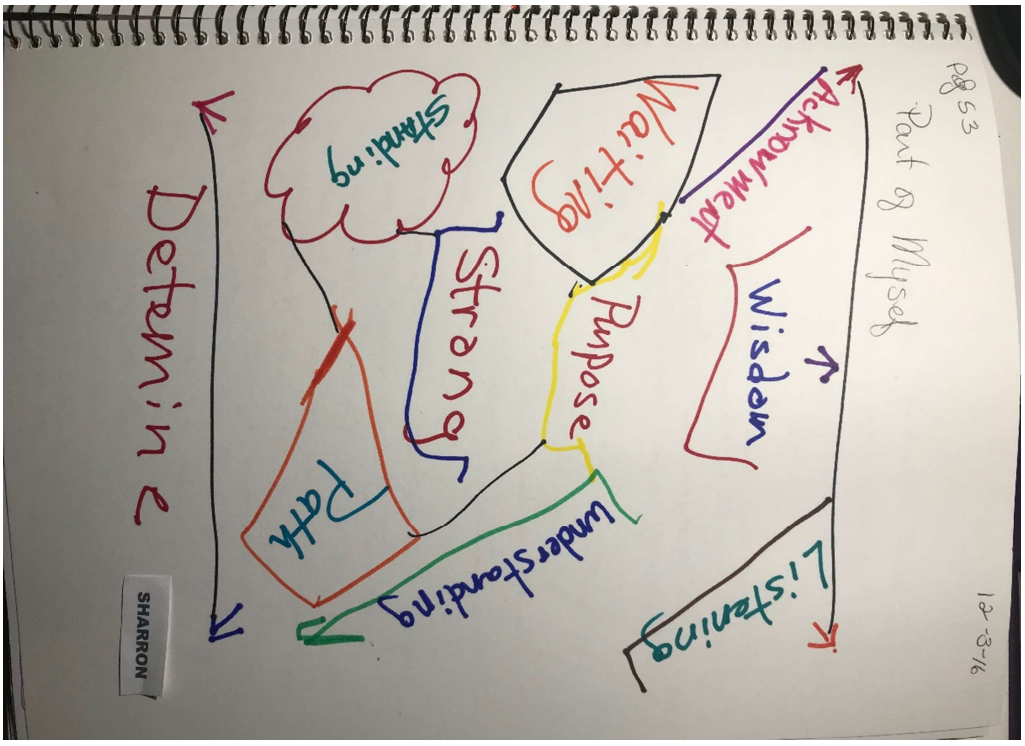
Sunflower_Distance Between Reference



APPENDIX E



Sharron_Color Reference



Sharron Determined Reference

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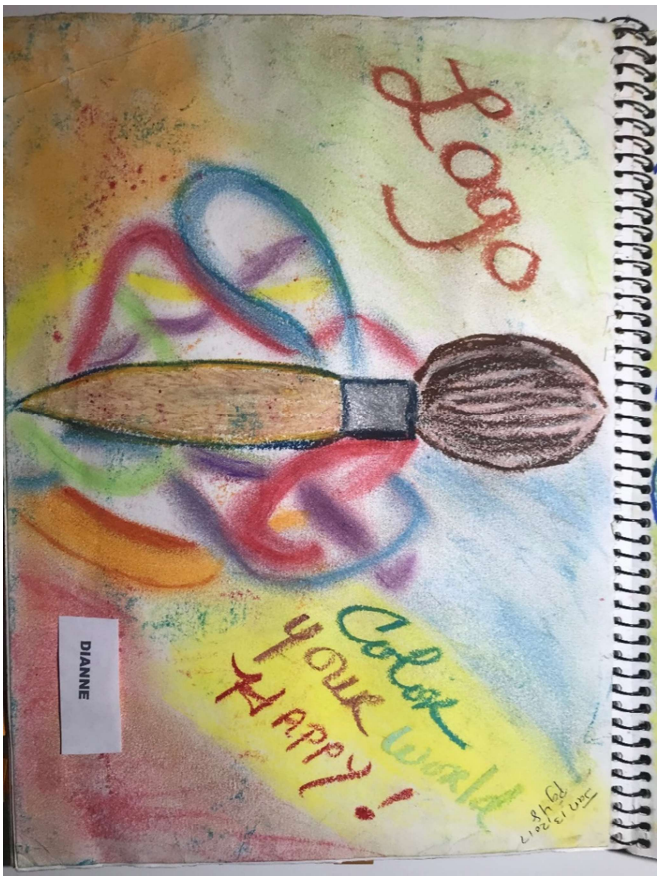

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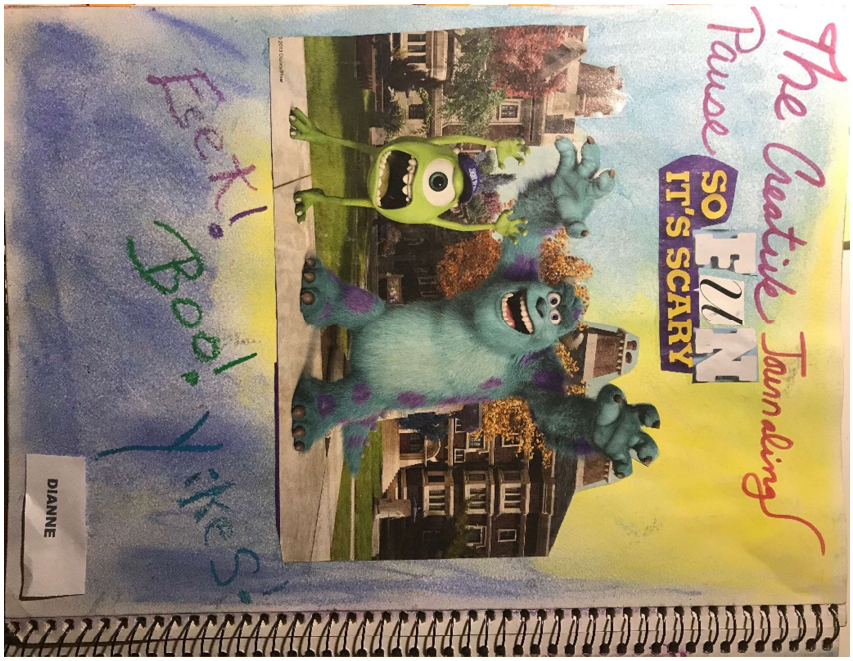
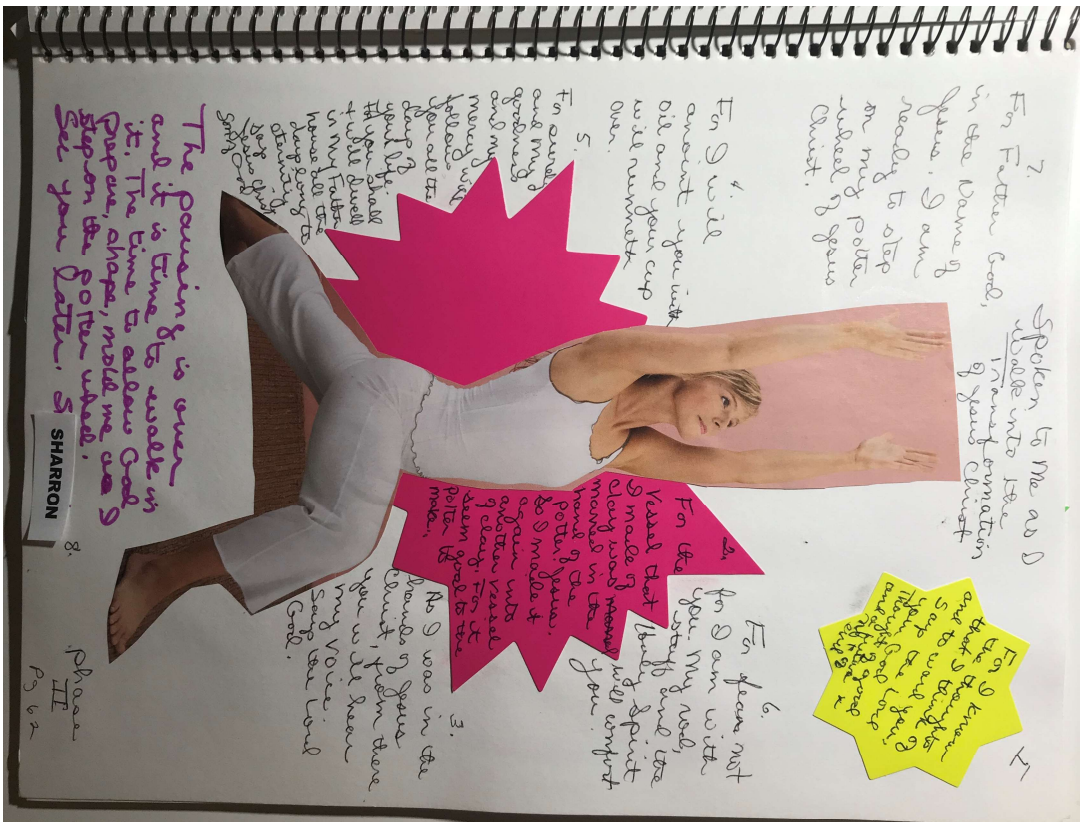
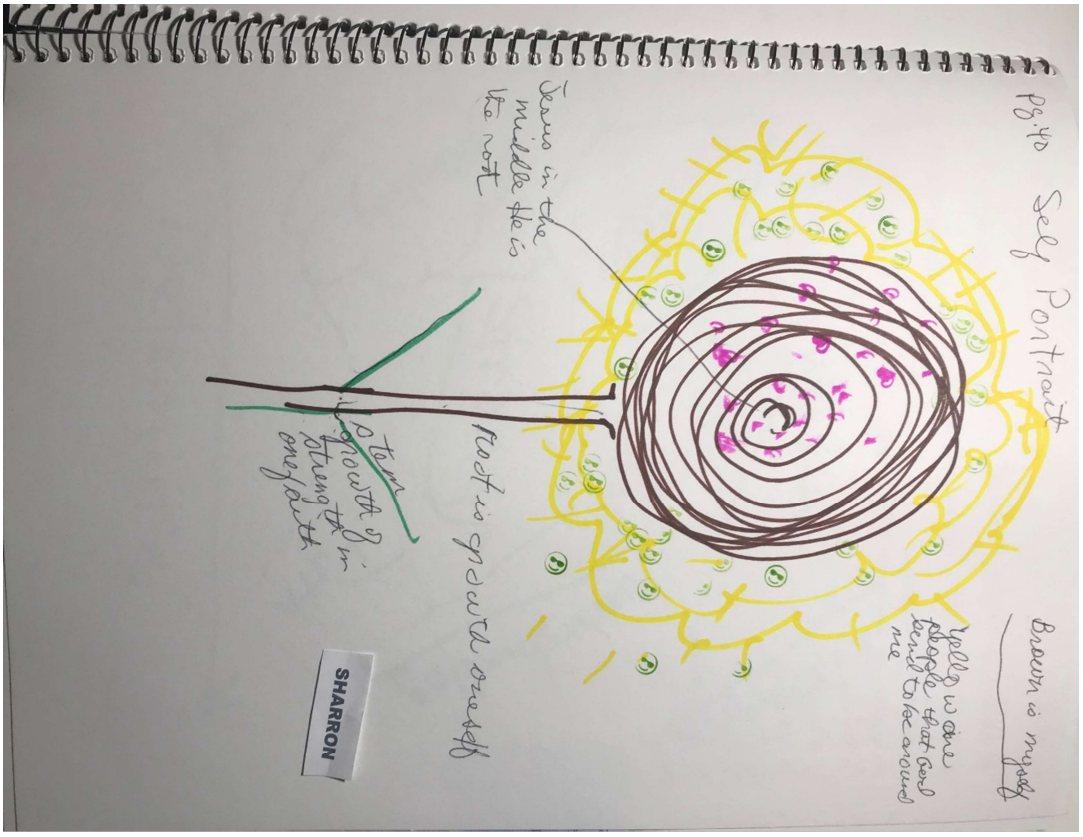


Dianne_Fun Reference

APPENDIX G



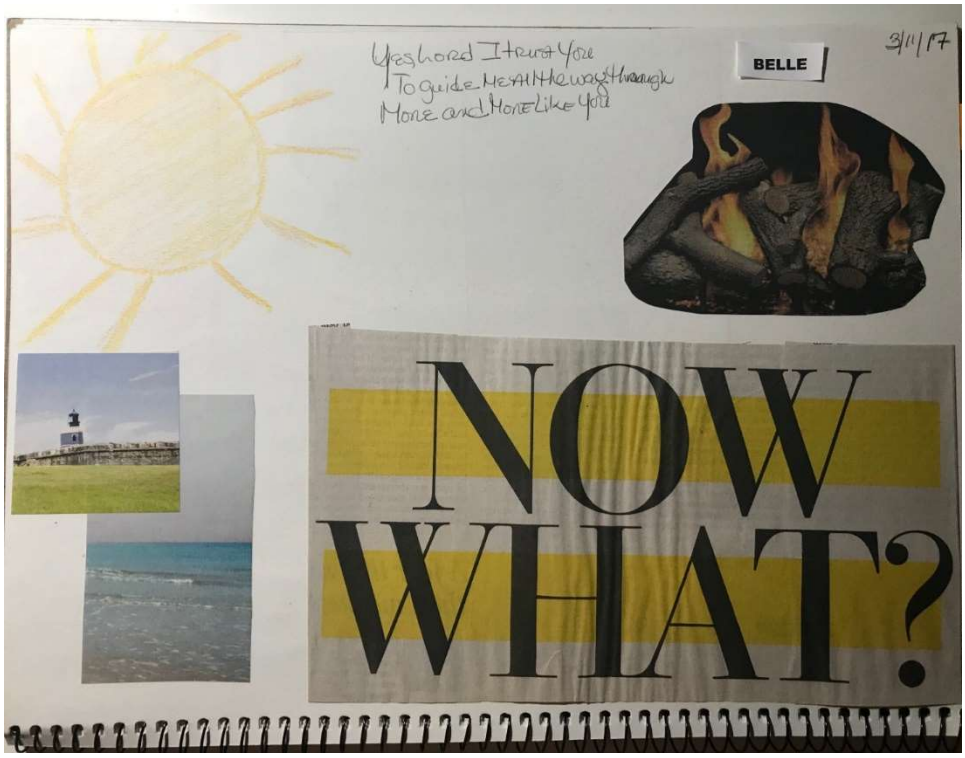


Sharron_Potter's Wheel Reference

Sharron_Growth Reference

APPENDIX H

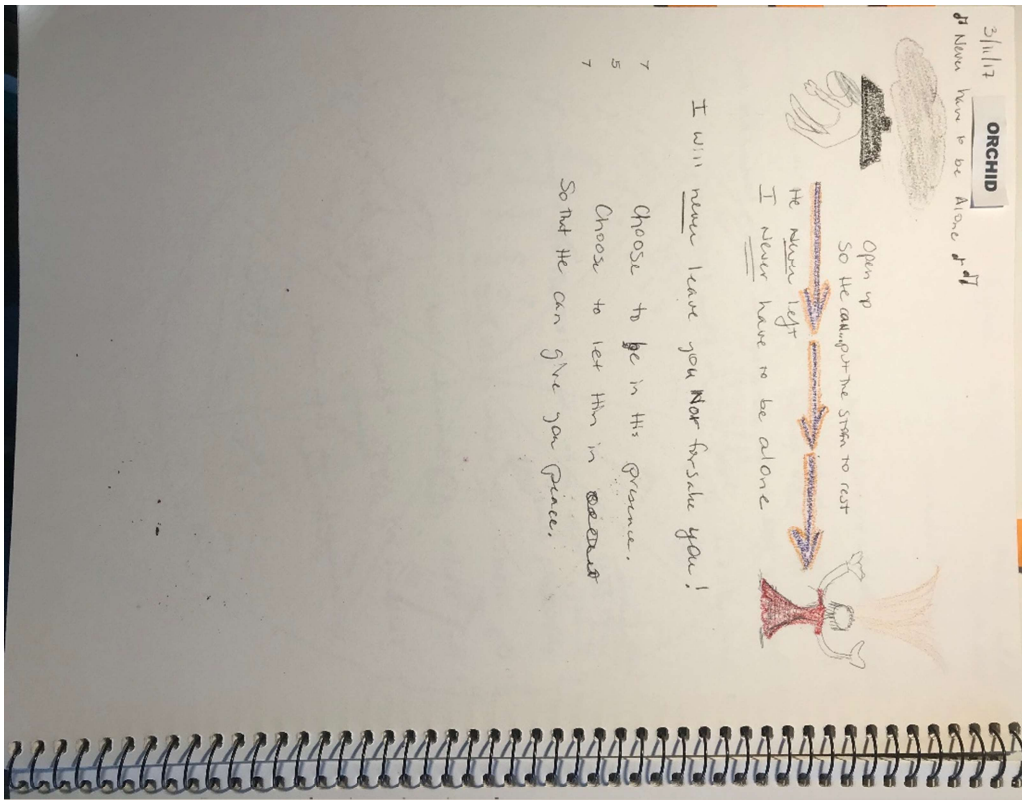
Belle_What's Next Reference



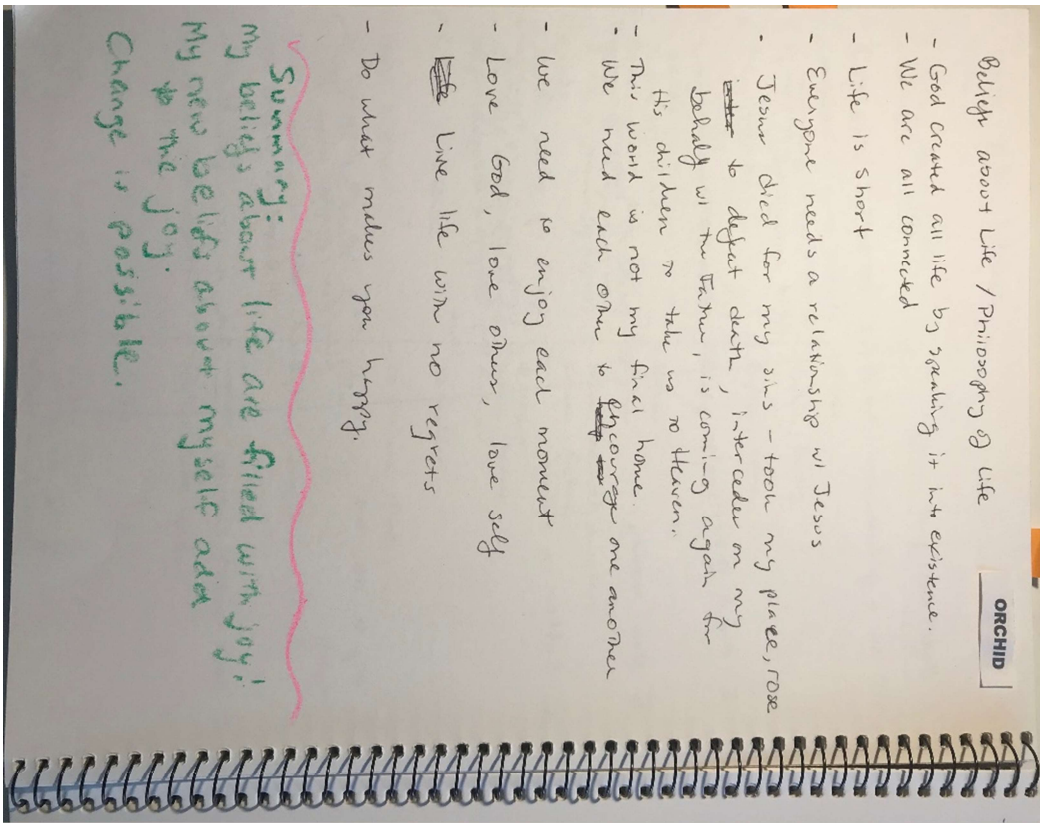
Belle_Cooking Reference

APPENDIX I

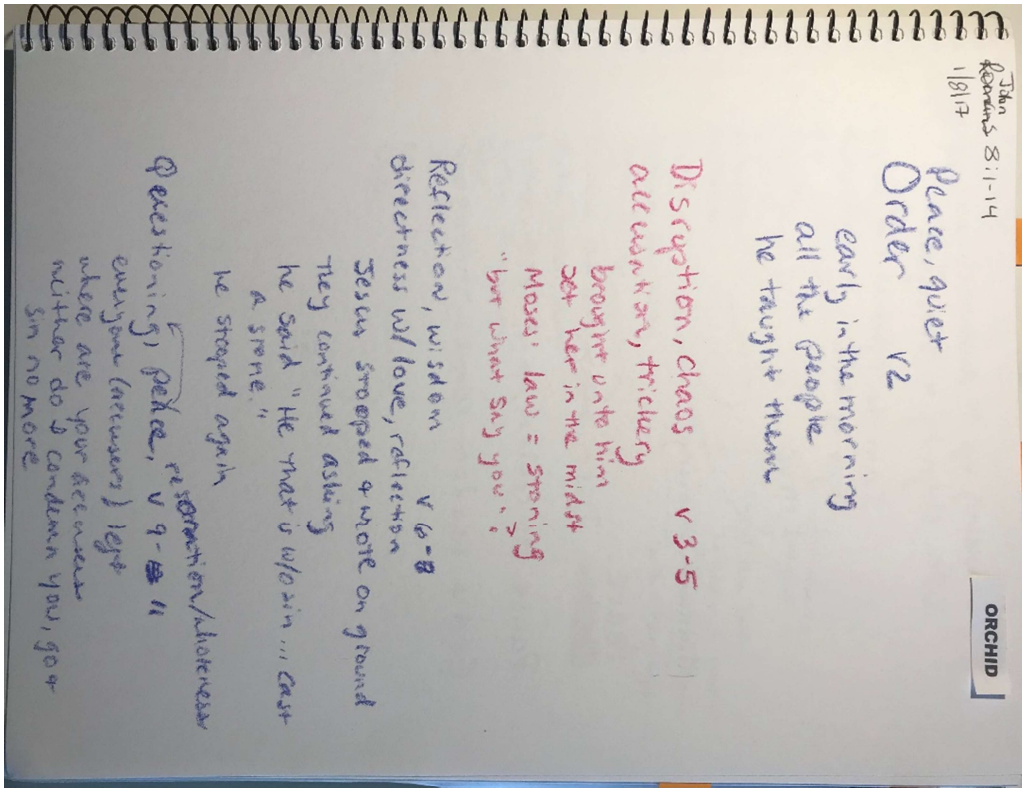
Orchid_Prayer Reference



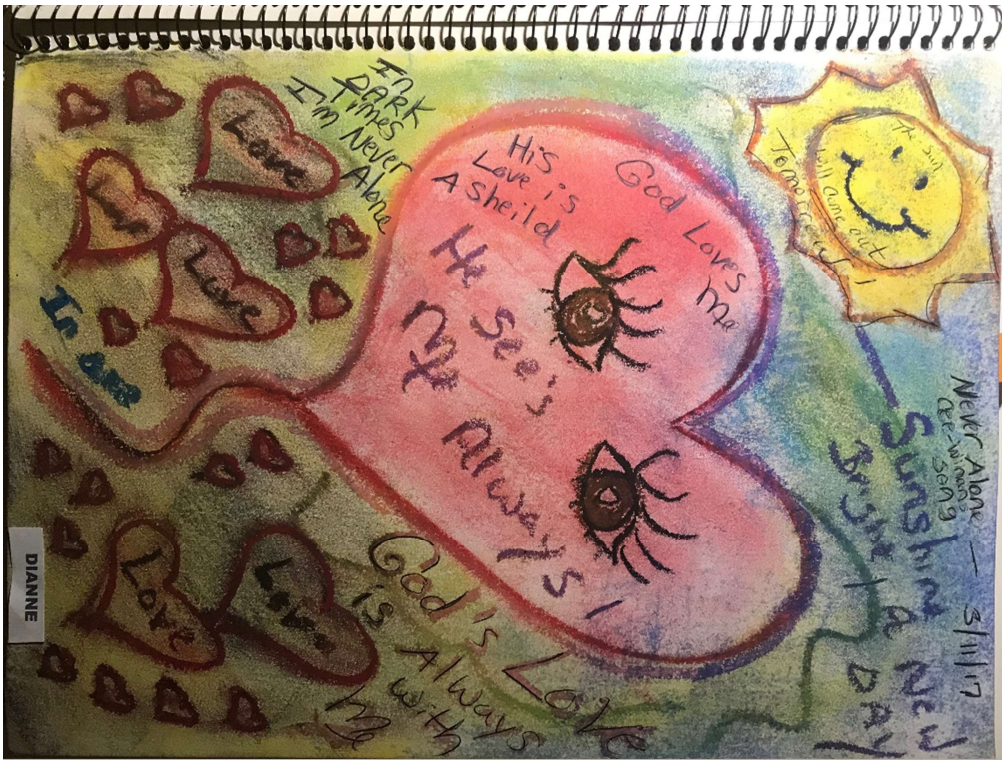
Orchid_Relationship with Lord Reference



APPENDIX J

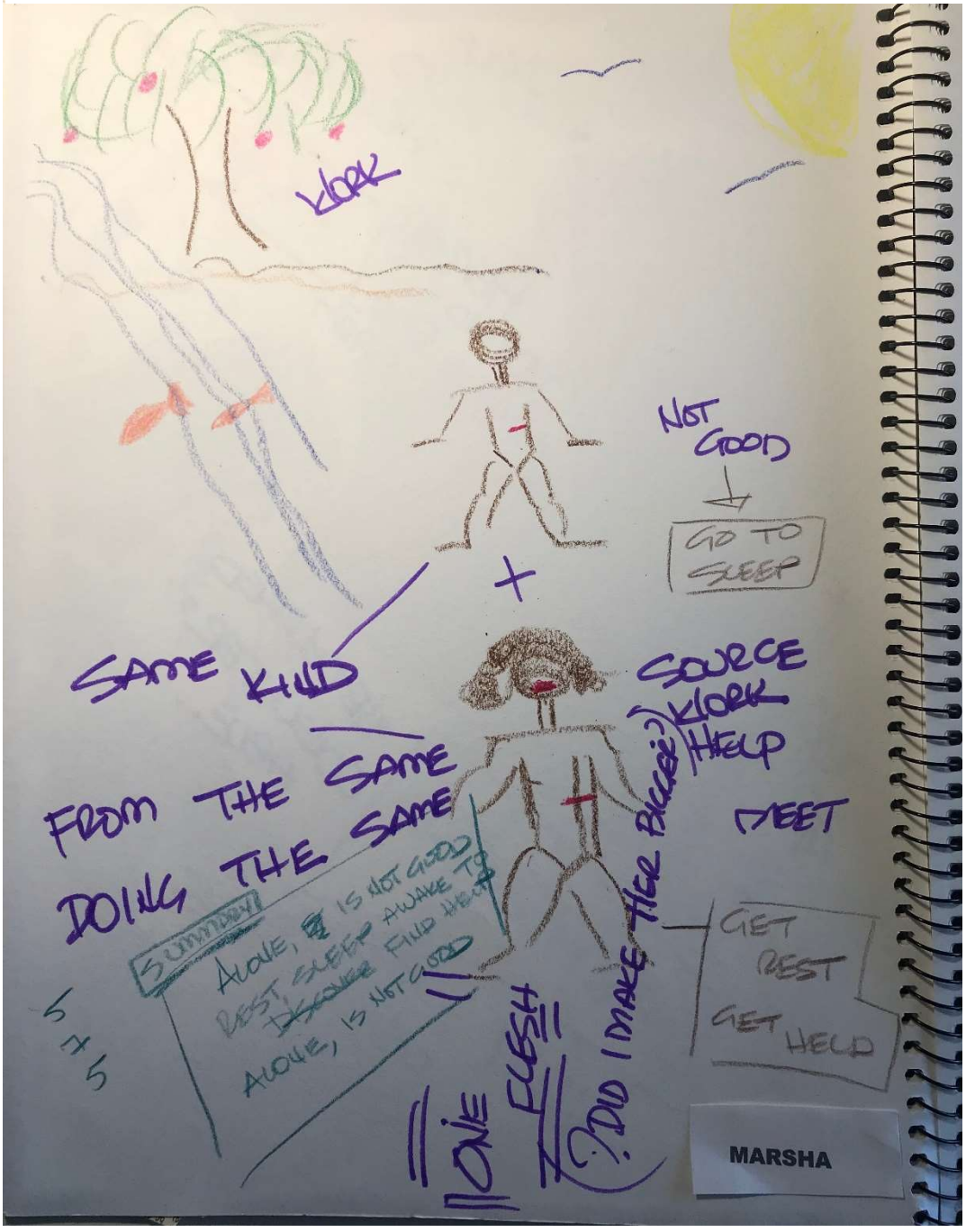

John Romans 8:1-14
1/8/17
ORCHID
Peace, quiet
Order v2
early in the morning
all the people
he taught them
Disruption, chaos v3-5
accusation, trickery
brought unto him
set them in the midst
Moses' law = stoning
"but what say you?"
Reflection, wisdom v6-8
directness w/ love, reflection
Jesus stooped & wrote on ground
they continued asking
he said "He that is w/o sin... cast a stone."
he stooped again
Questioning) peace, v9-11
everyone (accusers) left
where are your accusers
neither do I condemn you, go & sin no more
ORCHID
Standing up to authority v12-14
with agility & strength
I am the light
light of life
true
Haikus Summary
Peace,
Order, Disruption.
Pause to reflect and receive.
God's wisdom comes through.

APPENDIX K


Dark Times I'm Never Alone
God Loves Me
His Love is A Sheild
He See's Me Always
God's Love is Always with Me
Love
Love
Love

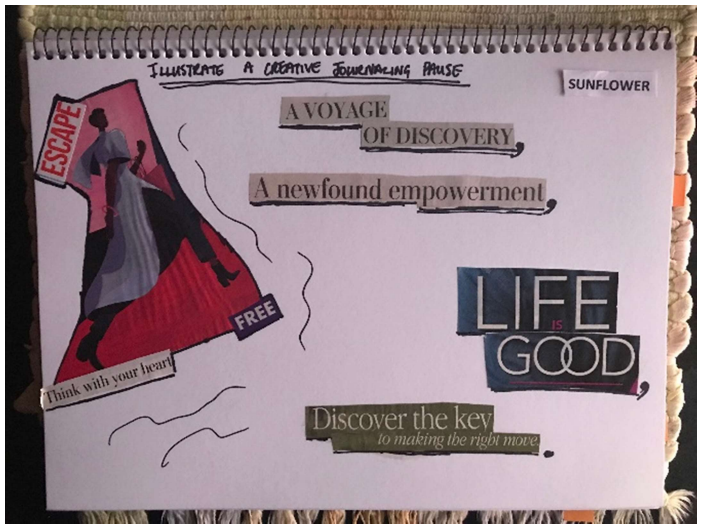
APPENDIX L

Marsha_Work Rest Reference



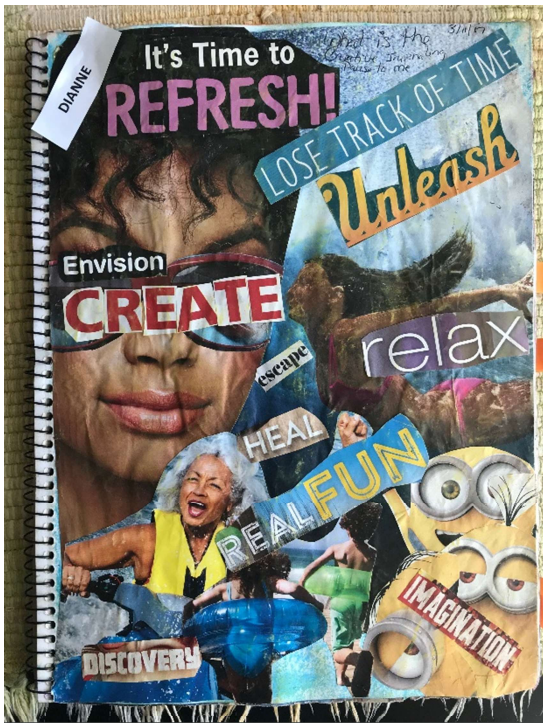
APPENDIX M

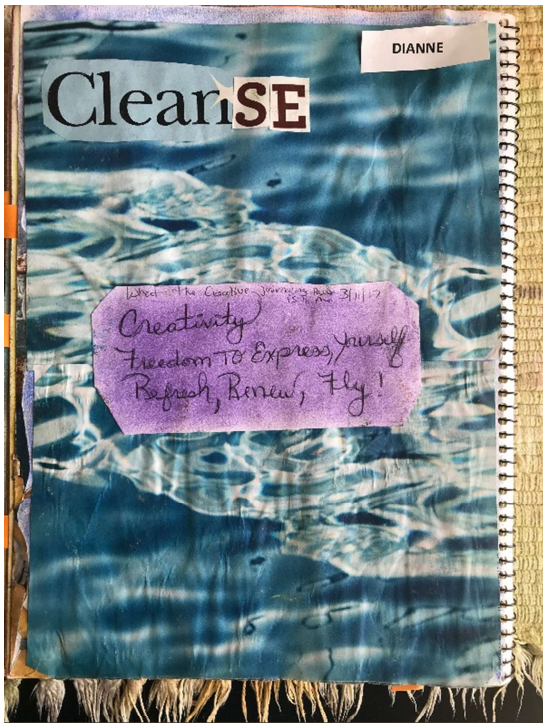
Participants_Creative Journaling Pause Image Reference

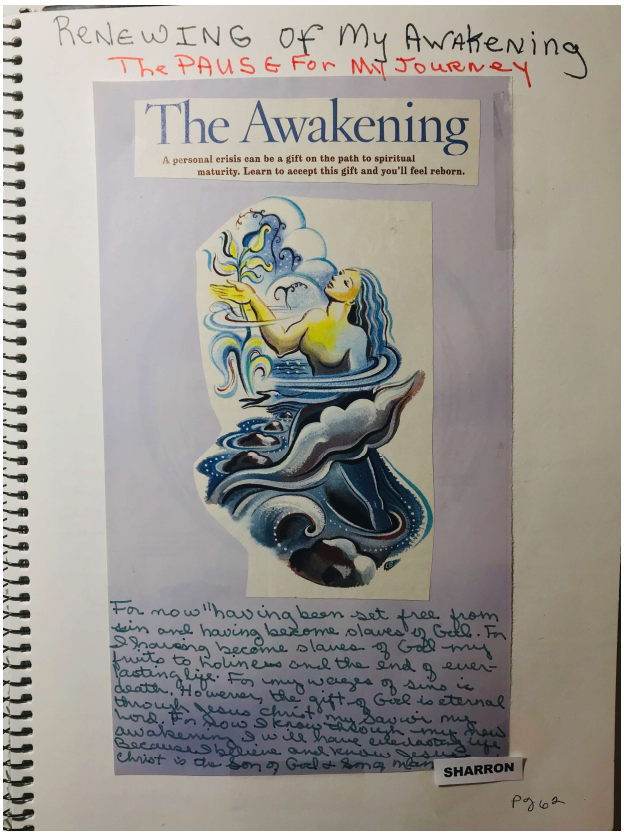


APPENDIX N

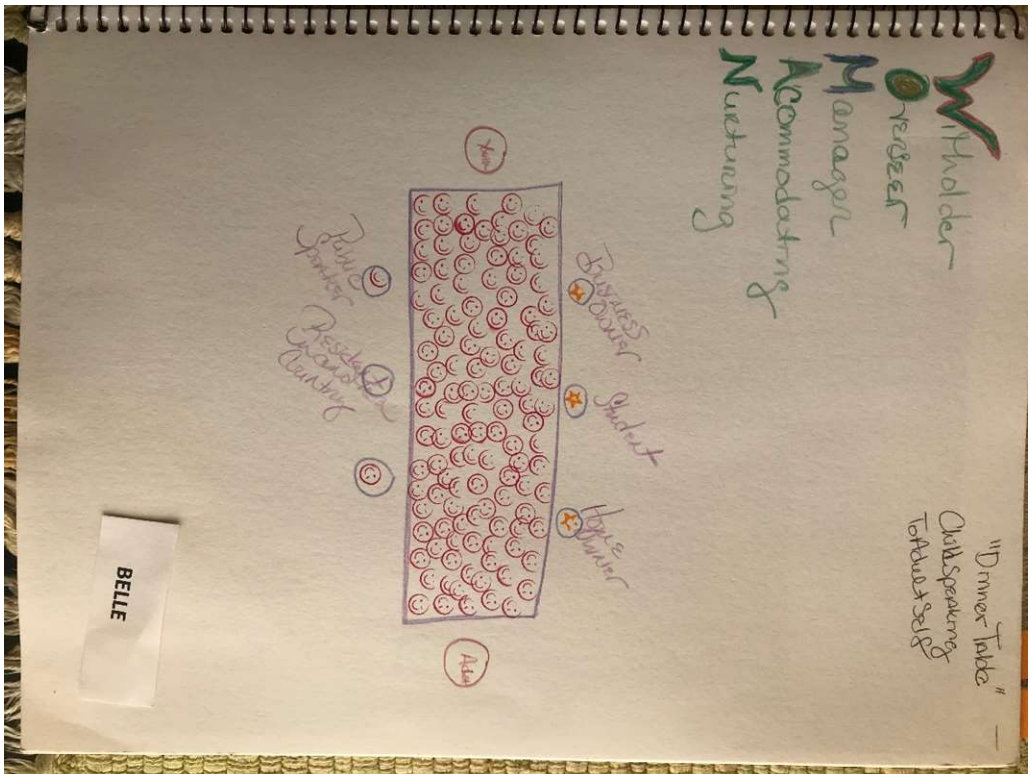
Participants_Creative Journaling Pause Image Reference





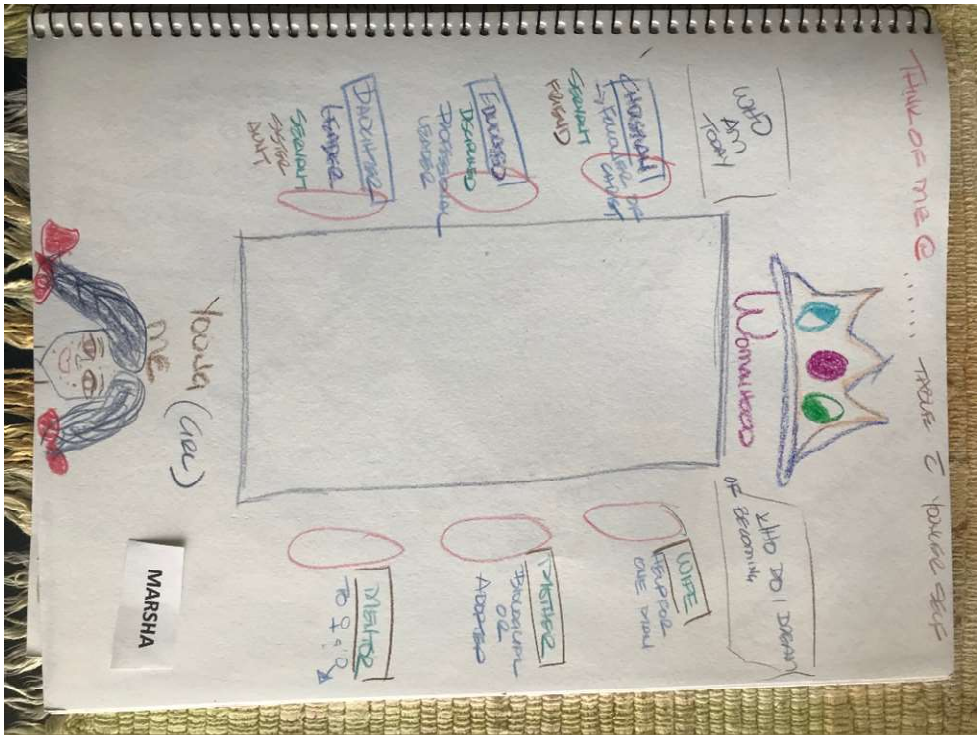


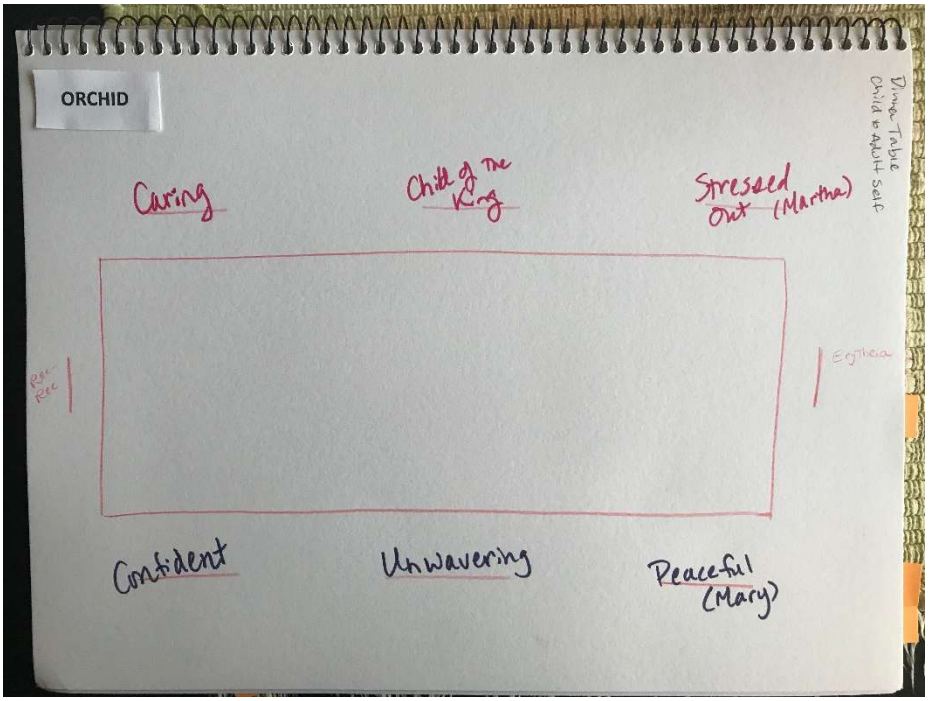
APPENDIX O



Participants_Sitting at the table Reference

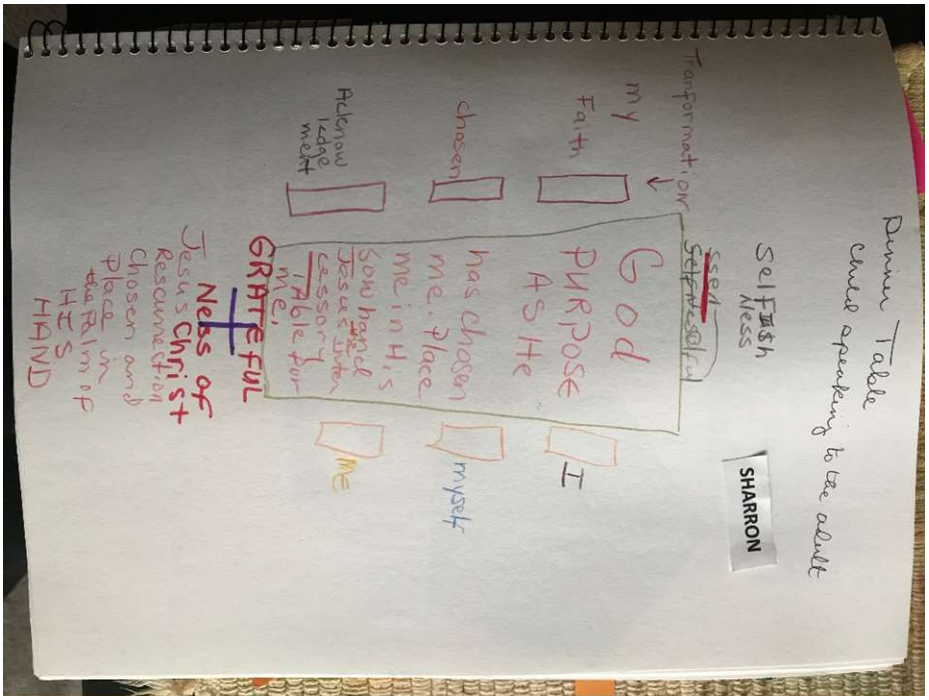
APPENDIX P

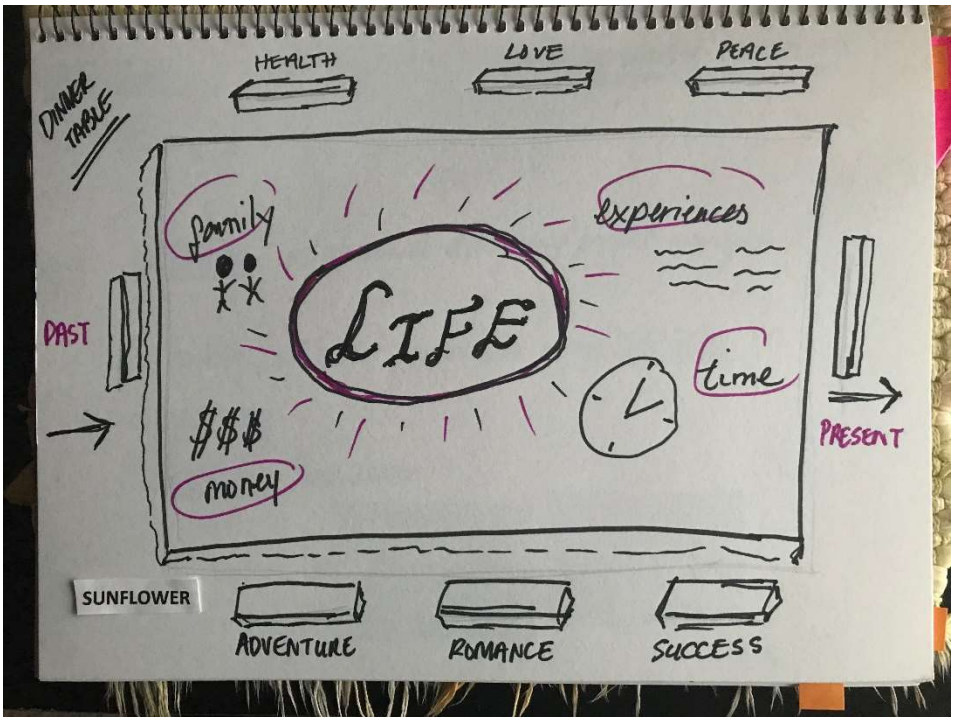




Participants_Sitting at the table Reference

APPENDIX Q

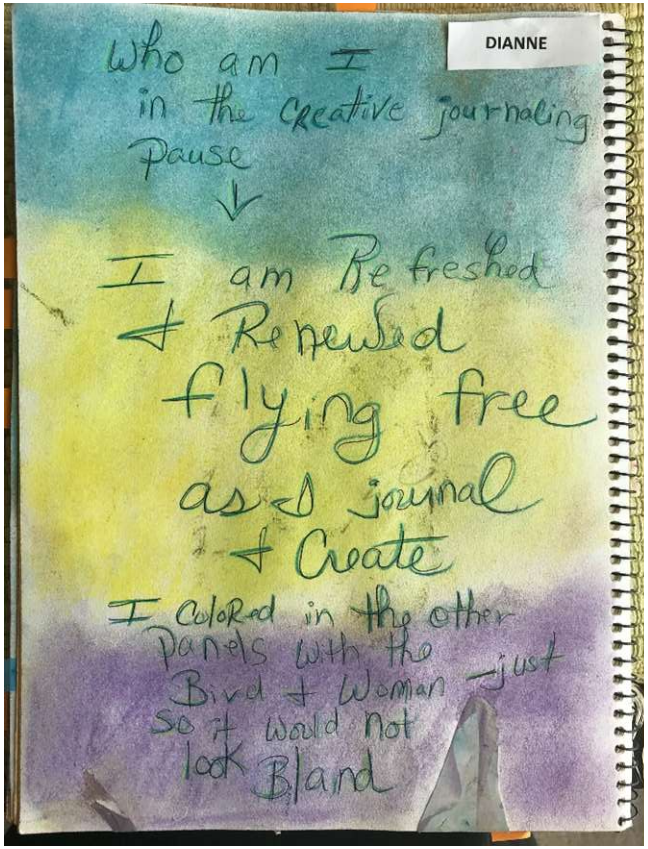




Participants_Sitting at the table Reference

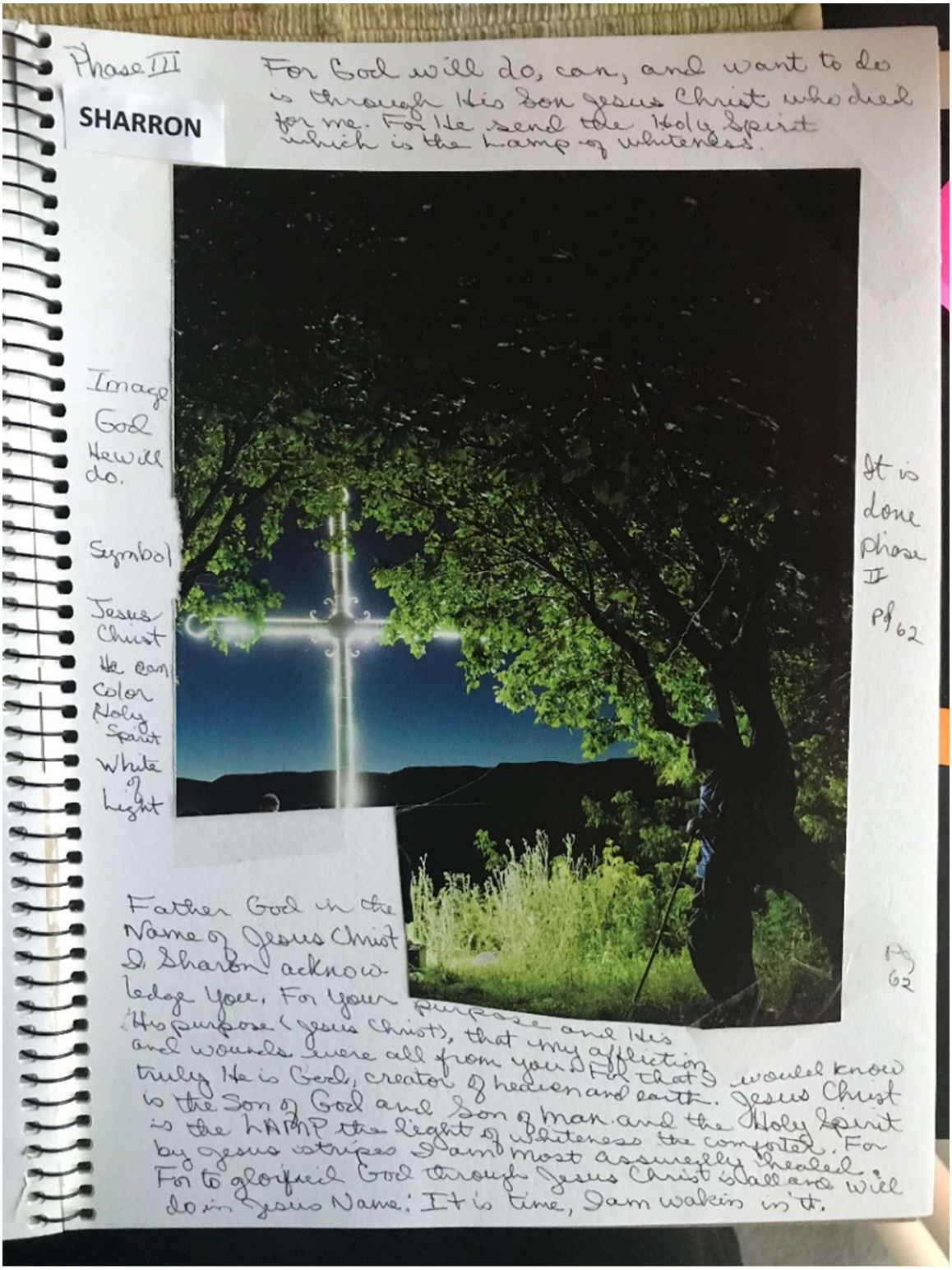
APPENDIX R

Color, Symbol, Image (CSI) Reference

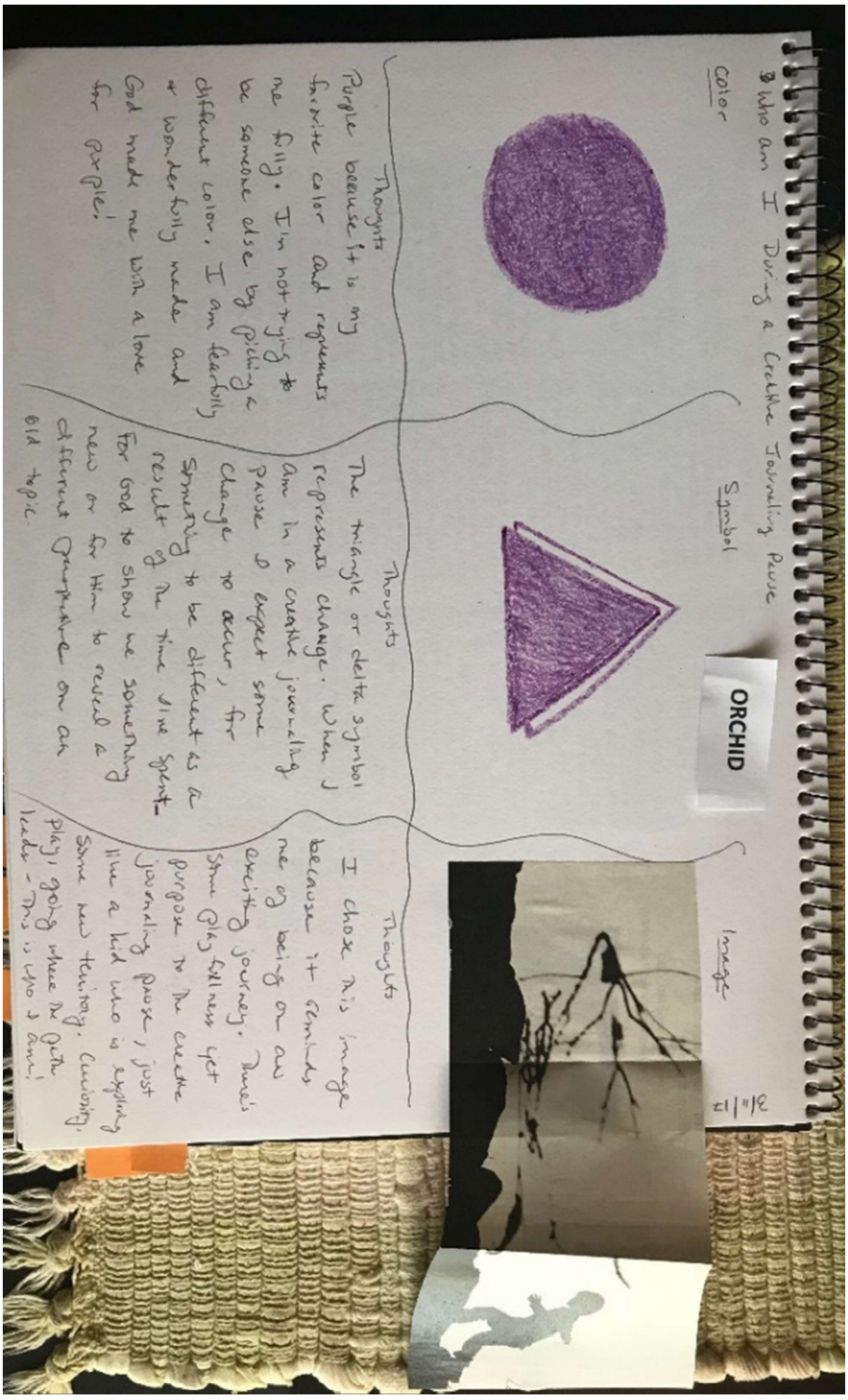


APPENDIX S

Color, Symbol, Image (CSI) Reference

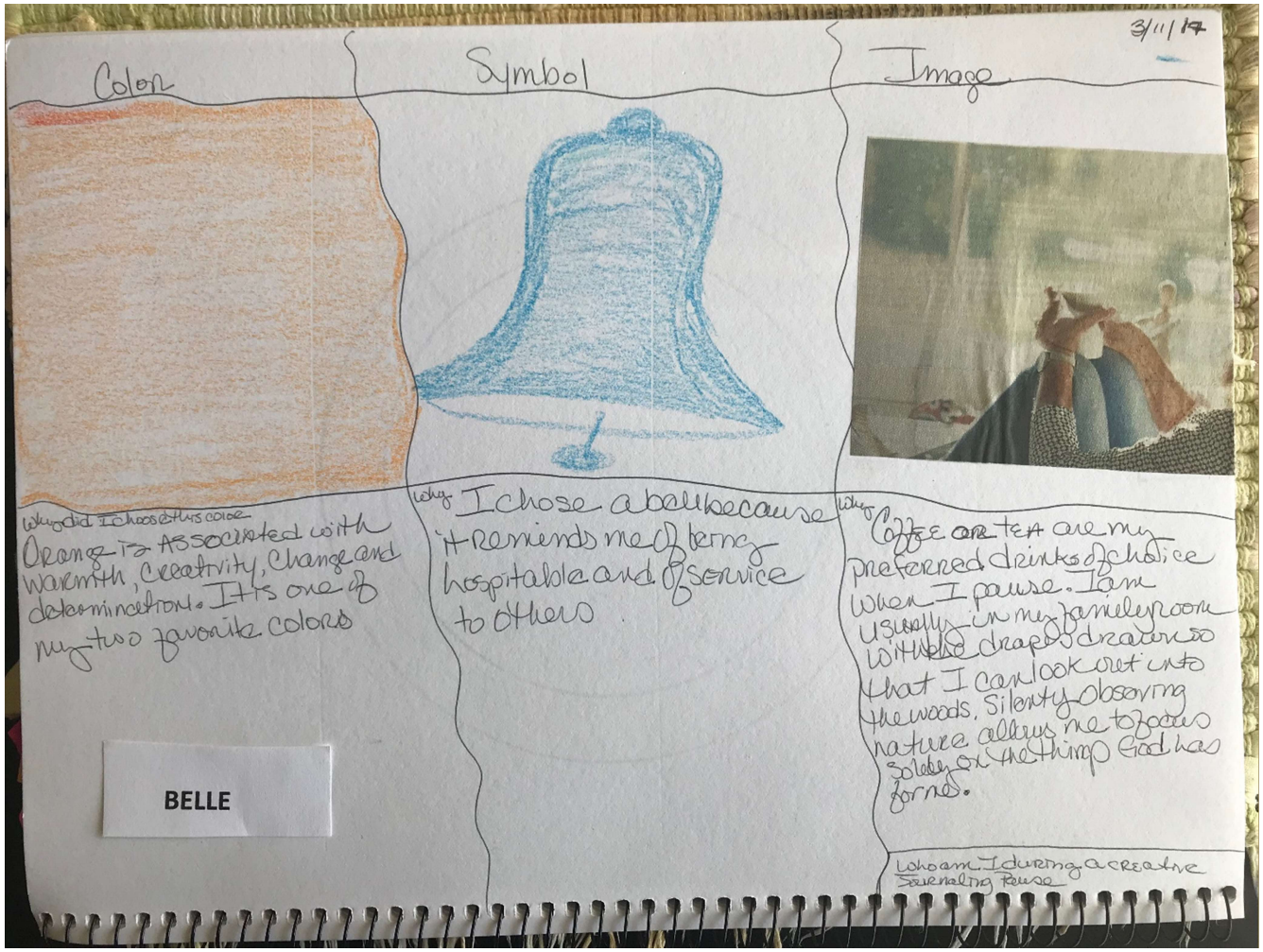


APPENDIX T

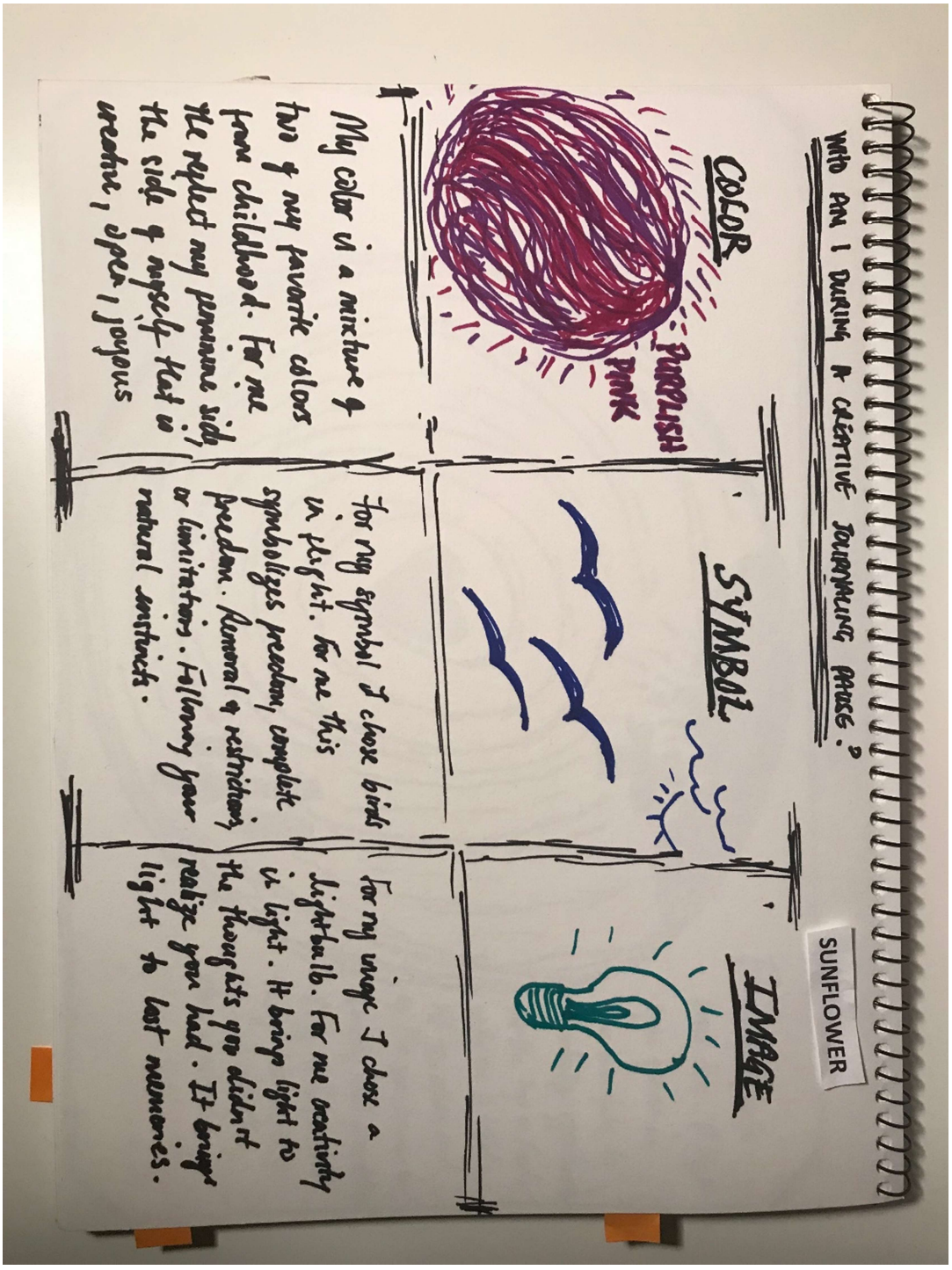

Who Am I During a Creative Journaling Pause
Color
Symbol
Image
ORCHID
Thoughts
Purple because it is my favorite color and represents me fully. I'm not trying to be someone else by picking a different color. I am fearfully & wonderfully made and God made me with a love for purple!
Thoughts
The triangle or delta symbol represents change. When I am in a creative journaling pause I expect some change to occur, for something to be different as a result of the time I've spent for God to show me something new or for Him to reveal a different perspective on an old topic.
Thoughts
I chose this image because it reminds me of being on an exciting journey. There's some playfulness yet purpose to the creative journaling pause, just like a kid who is exploring some new territory. Curiosity, play, going where the path leads - this is who I am!

APPENDIX U

Color, Symbol, Image (CSI) Reference



APPENDIX V


WHO AM I DURING A CREATIVE JOURNALING PROCESS?
SUNFLOWER
COLOR
SYMBOL
IMAGE
PURPLISH PINK
My color is a mixture of two of my favorite colors from childhood. For me the reflect my feminine side, the side of myself that is creative, open, joyous
For my symbol I chose birds in flight. For me this symbolizes freedom, complete freedom. Removal of restrictions or limitations. Following your natural instincts.
For my image I chose a lightbulb. For me creativity is light. It brings light to the thoughts you didn't realize you had. It brings light to lost memories.

APPENDIX W: CREATED CJP ACTIVITIES

GATHERING / SESSION TYPE	ACTIVITY	CREATIVE JOURNALING PAUSE (CJP) ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
All Gatherings, Individual and Group	***lectio divina***	During the beginning activities of each gathering, the women participate in *lectio divina* as a centering technique. Each step, or movement of *lectio divina* is a process of prayer (St. Benedict, 530 A.D/1998; Earle, 2003; Gargano, 1992/2007; Painter, 2014). Typically, the four steps of the *lectio divina* process are: (a) lectio (reading), (b) meditatio (reflection or thinking), (c) oratio (speech or address), and (d) contemplatio (contemplation, resting) (Painter, 2014). The reading prompts are excerpts from the Bible, John 8: 1-14, Genesis 1; and, Genesis 2; and from Lorde (1986), the poem Stations. For the last group gathering, participants listen to a song, Never Alone (Winans, 2016). This activity includes: 1) listening to a passage of literature or a song; then, 2) using creative journaling techniques, create a journal page that expresses their thoughts/feelings. Lastly, following the activity, a summary is written in haiku or short statement.
Gathering I / Group Session	**The Woman I am:**	When we enter a creative journaling pause, we provide ourselves with a moment to come home to ourselves. For instance, focusing on the statement The Woman I am, each study participant imagines herself as an adult sitting at the table with herself as a little girl to discuss who they are in the present and who they would like to be in the future. This activity involves several components: 1) Draw a long table (in a rectangle shape). Include six seats—one seat on each short side and three on each long side. The seats represent yourself in different roles a) label / draw a picture for each short to indicate an adult woman and a girl child; b) on one side of the long side indicate who you are today; and, c) on the other side of the long side indicate the woman you want to become/dream of becoming tomorrow. 2) Define Woman—What is being woman? **and/or** Write "I am Woman …" finish the phrase. 3) Using the newspaper, create an image of the woman you are without constraints. 4) Provide a summary of your thoughts as it relates to this activity—haiku or short statement.
Gathering IV / Group Session	**CSI: Who am I during a creative journaling pause?**	Using the color (C), symbol (S), image (I) technique (Church, Morrison, & Ritchhart, 2011), CJP participants develop a journal page to answer the question, Who am I during a Creative Journaling Pause? On this page, there are 2 rows and 3 columns. (Each column represents C, S, and I, respectively.) Participants draw, write, and/or find images from newspapers / magazines to provide a representation of each category. Then, for each category, the participants write why they choose that particular color, symbol, and/or image.
Gathering IV / Group Session	**Creative Journaling Pause Image**	Using newspapers, the participants are asked to develop an image to answer the question, What is a Creative Journaling Pause?

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